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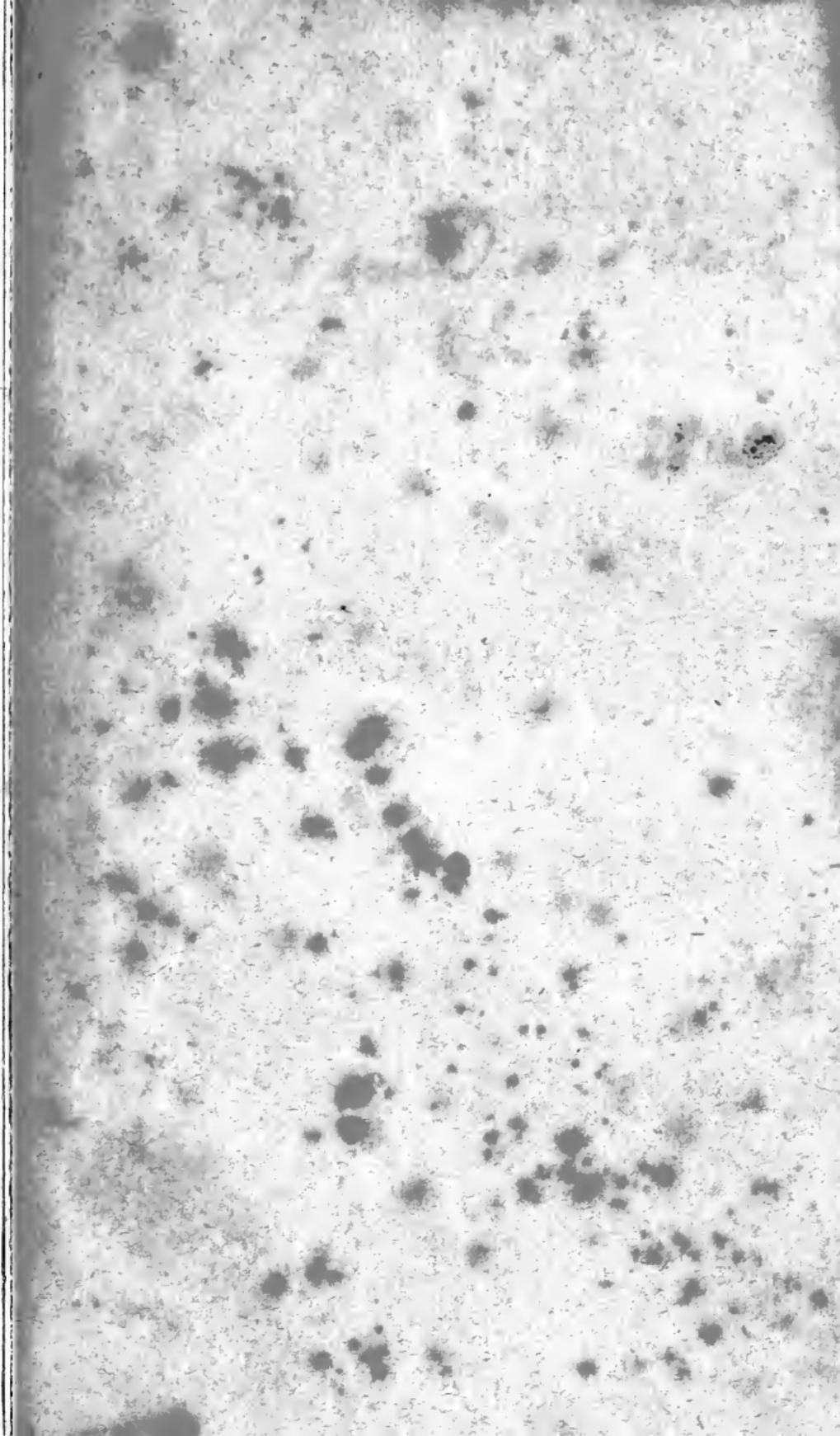
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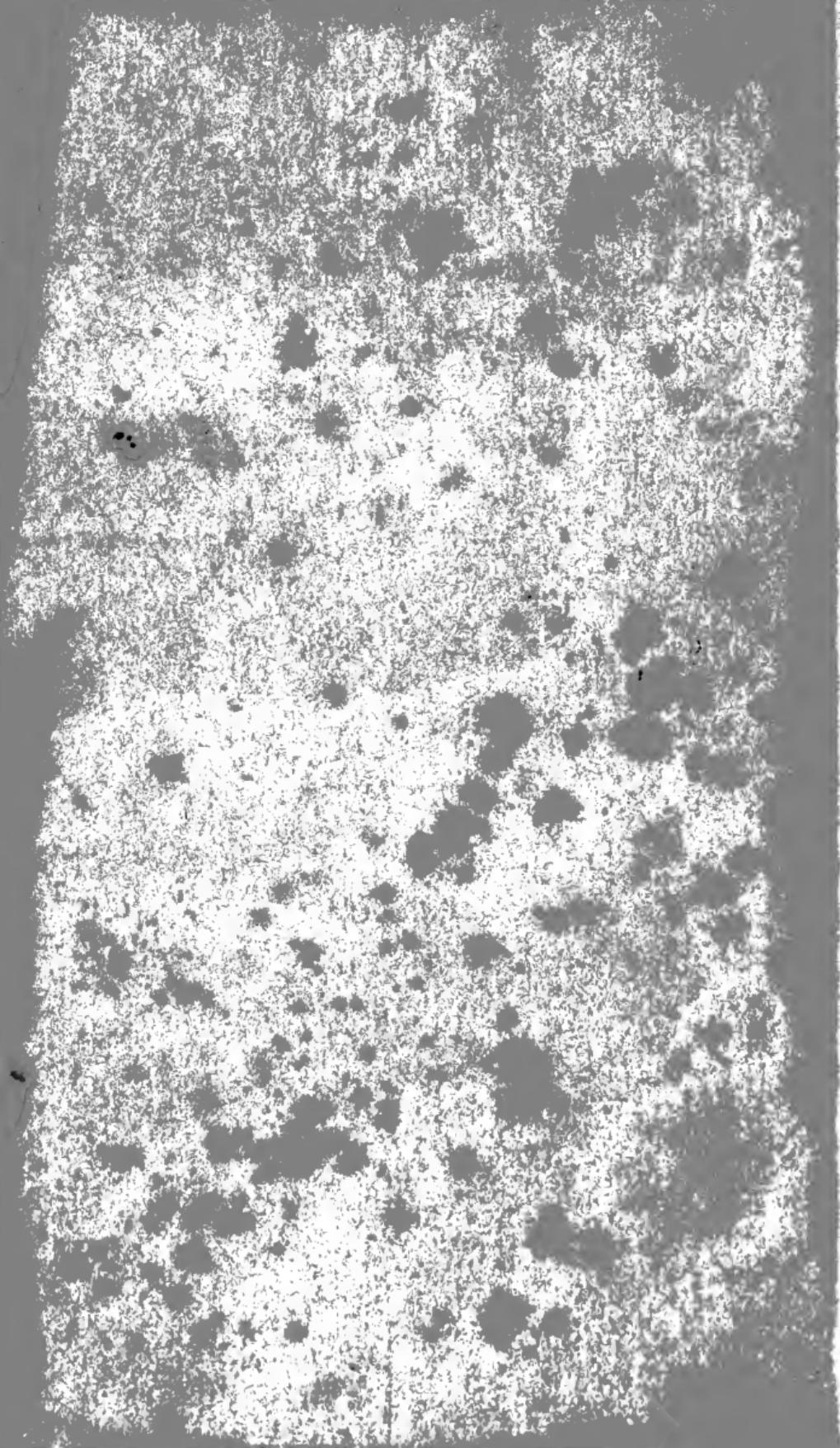
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AN

EPISTOLARY DISCUSSION

UPON *the paraphernalia*

of modern
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AN

EPISTOLARY DISCUSSION

UPON *The outside*

RELIGION,

BETWEEN

G. W.

A PROTESTANT OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND,

AND

M. J. B. B.

A FRENCH ROMAN CATHOLIC.

Omnia probate, quod bonum est, tenete.

Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.

1 Ep. to the Thess. v. 21.

London, 1798.

Sold by T. CADEL and W. DAVIES, in the Strand;
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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Advertisement of the Editor.

THIS is not one of those controversies, wherein the same person objects and answers, careful not to start questions he cannot resolve, to his advantage. Mess. G. W. and M. J. B. B. both equally free from prejudices, of sentiments equally liberal, and well known by respective productions that entitle them to public esteem, come here, as it were, by chance, to a discussion, of all others, the most important; and enter into it, with an unfeigned disposition of fighting their battle, to the utmost of their power. Nothing respecting the matter in debate, that can be objected, is omitted; and nothing objected, not to be given up, remains unanswered. There is the same fairness, on both sides, without either sophistry, or evasion. Those sharp and sarcastic reflections, which by a disappointed adversary, are commonly recurred to, for want of a reply, are not to be found in these Letters. It is true, that Mr. G. W. availing himself of the privilege he first claimed, of his free speech on the superstitions of the Church of his Antagonist,

is, sometimes, rather hard upon them; but still, it is done in a manner deprecating personal offence. If Mr. M. J. B. B. is not always even with Mr. G. W. in idiomatical expressions, an allowance is to be made in favour of his being a foreigner, who writes in a language, he was, till lately, a stranger to.

It is unnecessary to observe that these Letters were not intended for the press; as any one, who shall peruse them, will easily perceive. We are indebted, for their publication, to the friends of the Contendents. They wisely thought, that a discussion, on a subject so highly important, made throughout with so much impartiality and candour, could not but be acceptable to Christians of all denominations.

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EPISTOLARY DISCUSSION UPON RELIGION.

LETTER

FROM G. W. TO M. J. B. B.

March 15, 1797.

Sir,

YOUR answer to Mrs. E. the other day, when she requested to know if you did not think she could be saved as well by the Protestant religion as by yours, *that all you knew on the subject, was, there was only one way to Heaven; if Mrs. E. was in that way, you were not, if you were, she was not,* shall apologize for the liberty I take, when I am entreating you to be so good as otherwise to explain yourself on a subject

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subject of so much importance ; for you need not to be told, Sir, that this answer which might be expected from your politeness, was not a satisfactory one to the question that was put to you. It was a long time the topic of our conversation, after your departure ; and upon Mrs. E. observing that during the three years she had had the honour of knowing you, she had never heard you blame any one for their religious opinions, and that you were (pardon me, Sir, her expression,) the most charitable Papist she had ever known, it was agreed I should propose to you, to examine the subject in writing, conscious that verbal discussions on religion, rarely produce any good, mostly indeed finishing by contention and enmity.

If then, Sir, the proposition is not unpleasant to you, these are the conditions, on which I will willingly enter with you, into a controversy so interesting ;

FIRST

FIRST, that you shall not be offended at the liberty with which I may censure what I do not approve in the doctrine of your Church.

SECONDLY, that it shall never be made the subject of our discourse, when we meet, either at Mrs. E's or elsewhere.

THIRDLY, that you give me for reasons, neither *probabilities*, nor *pious opinions*, but *authorities*.

LASTLY, Sir, that you carefully distinguish *dogmas*, from *discipline*; for I am of your opinion, that we ought not to confound the abuse with the institution, nor, as you say, "cut down the tree for a few dead leaves."

On these conditions, Sir, I am ready to commence a correspondence with you, which in procuring me the advantage of a nearer acquaintance, can-

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not fail enhancing the esteem with
which

I am, Sir,

G. W.

L E T T E R

FROM M. J. B. B. TO G. W.

March 17, 1797.

Sir,

I have received the honour of yours, and hasten to answer it: I will, with all my heart, enter with you into the discussion you propose. I am not at all deterred from it by your conditions; because, to give the reason of my belief, when required, is to me a duty I shall be always ready to fulfil.

It is very true, Sir, as observed by Mrs. E. that I blame no one on account of his religious tenets. I think that he whom we judge to be in error, is mis-

miserable enough, without our taking upon us, against God's prohibition, to punish him for it, out of an indiscreet zeal; in no way excusable; but, pray, Sir, do not misunderstand me: to have a regard for erring people, is by no means to approve their error; such a charity would be a crime, a shameful desertion of truth; and, though I love all men, be their religious opinions what they may, because Jesus Christ will have me see in every one the neighbour I am commanded to love, I should be misunderstood, if it was from thence argued, as my sentiment, that I agree any way may lead to Heaven: no, Sir, I believe there is one only, and that a very narrow one, that leads to it; and undoubtedly so do you; but what you may believe and I do not, is, that to be in that way, it is enough to believe in Christ and receive, as inspired from God, the old and new testament, in whatever manner they be understood, as if truth

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was not essentially one and indivisible; and two people of a contrary opinion on the same subject might be both right: surely, Sir, if one is so, the other is necessarily wrong. Hence the necessity for us attentively to examine before we take a part, in a matter so highly important, on which depends our everlasting welfare.

In order to proceed methodically in our discussion, without unnecessary preamble, I will ingenuously lay before you the faith of the Roman Catholic, free from every thing not essentially belonging to it, leaving you to judge if it be that faith, established by Jesus Christ, *without which, it is impossible to please God.* Heb. xi, 6. I shall afterwards answer your objections, if you think fit to make any, as I doubt not but you will; and, if I am so happy as to convince you that the Roman Catholic is in the way we ought to follow, to go to Heaven, I
shall

shall be too much repaid for my trouble, and sincerely will pray to God, to complete in you, and any one of those who may be concerned in our discussion, what, through my intervention, he shall have been pleased to begin.

I shall send you, as soon as possible, an exposition of the Roman Catholic's faith, requesting, before-hand, you will excuse my bad English, and overlook the language in favour of my earnest desire to prove that

I am with respect, Sir,

M. J. B.

LETTER

FROM M. J. B. B. TO G. W.

March 28, 1797.

Sir,

A few preliminary observations ought to precede the exposition I have to lay before you. It is certain, that the truths and maxims we receive as inspired from God, were not delivered to men in writing; that the first written Gospel, namely that of St. Matthew, was not penned, until 9, or 10 years after Christ's ascension; that the time when those of St. Mark and St. Luke, the disciples of the apostles, from whom they had their information, were published in writing, is quite uncertain; that St. John's Gospel was not formed into a book, until near 100 years after Christ's coming into the world; that little, as it is, what we have of the acts of the Apostles, dates from the year of Christ, 63, and their epistles were all written at epochs more or less re-

remote from the infancy of the Christian religion. It is likewise certain that several apocryphal gospels, with divers other writings, falsely attributed to the Apostles, were in the mean time published.

Hence it follows that the work of God would have been imperfect and deficient, if before these truths and maxims were written, there had not been certain and unquestionable means to know them, as also to distinguish, when written, between the books which were said to contain them, those which did it really, from those which did not; those which were inspired by the Holy Ghost, from those which were not; those which were written by the apostolical men they were attributed to, from those which were attributed to them, and were not written by them.*

But such infallible means were, by God himself, ensured to us, in the testi-

* The word of God descended by tradition, from the apostles, through a continual succession of the testimony

timony of the Catholic Church, which made St. Augustin say: *I should not believe the Gospel, were I not moved thereunto by the authority of the Catholic church.* tom. viii, c. v, p. cliv. ed. Ben. All that the testimony of the Catholic Church declares to us to be revealed from God, we must believe to be so, and only believe to be so, what is, as such, ascertained by her testimony. Wherefore, since, in matter of faith, there is nothing truly certain, but what the Church of Christ believes and teaches as such, and the books we receive as inspired from God, are only the expression of it, *consecrated by her testimony and authority*, this ought to be, and will be the first article, with which we shall begin our exposition of the Roman Catholic's faith.

faithful, for upwards of 360 years, until the present canon of the scripture was established by the church, in the council of Laodicea.

EXPOSITION

EXPOSITION
OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC'S
FAITH

The Roman Catholic believes, that the Church, out of which there is no salvation, is the Catholic and Apostolic Church, the head of which, the Pope, successor of S. Peter, by a visible and uninterrupted succession of about 250 bishops, acknowledged as such, by the Christian world, has, generally speaking, always resided in Rome from her establishment, for which reason, she is called *the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.*

That the Church is infallible, i e, that, if any part or parts of her happen to fall into error, Jesus Christ will not permit that the others fall into it, *at the same time*; so that, when duly interrogated on the controverted point, their answer, God making good his word recorded in Matt. xxviii, 20, shall always declare the truth, such as it was taught

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taught by Jesus Christ and preached by his apostles and their lawful successors.

That there are seven sacraments of the new law, understanding by a sacrament, *a sensible sign of invisible grace.* Viz. **BAPTISM, EUCHARIST, CONFIRMATION, PENANCE, HOLY ORDERS, EXTREME UNCTION** and, **MATRIMONY**; the existence of which stands proved by what follows.

BAPTISM: *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* John, iii, 13.

EUCHARIST: *Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.* John, vi, 54.

CONFIRMATION: *They laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.* Acts, viii, 17.

PENANCE: *Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose you shall retain, they are retained.* John, xx, 23.

HOLY ORDERS

HOLY ORDERS: *I admoniſh thee, that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee, by the imposition of my hands.* 2 Tim. i, 6.

EXTREME UNCTION: *Let them (the priests) pray over him, (any ſick person) annoiſting him with oil in the name of the Lord, and if he be in ſins, they ſhall be forgiven him.* James v, 14.

MATRIMONY: it is not ſo explicitly recorded in the scripture as a sacrament, but the Church, by declaring that it was always received by all the Catholic world, as a sacrament of the new law, has removed all doubt about its exiſtence, as ſuch.

The Roman Catholic, consistently with the Apostles' creed, and those of St. Athanasius and Nicea the contents of which he profeſſedly receives, believes that there is one God only, in three persons, who alone is adora‐ble, and whom alone he adores.

C

That

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That we are all redeemed by Jesus Christ who is the only mediator of our redemption.

Moreover, that Jesus Christ is, *in a spiritual manner*, really and substantially present in the Eucharist, conscious that he can do more than we can conceive, and seeing that he could not make use of clearer and plainer words than he did, to make us believe it, saying that the body he gives to his disciples, is *the same body that shall be delivered to death; that the blood he gives them, is the same blood that shall be shed on the cross for them.* Luke xxii, 19. 1 Cor. xi, 24. and as such, as present in that inscrutable mystery, *he prays to, and adores him.*

That Jesus Christ, by commanding his Apostles, at his last supper, to do what he had just done, ordered them, and in their persons, their successors, bishops and priests, to offer *in that spiritual manner*, the sacrifice he was to offer

offer upon the cross, for the redemption of the world, in which sacrifice, that pure offering which the prophet MALACHI foretold, i, 11, should be offered in every place among the Gentiles, we present to God the price of our redemption, and feed our souls upon the victim offered, the whole of which is under the species of bread, as well as under the species of wine, under every particle of either, as well as under the whole of each; for that Jesus Christ being risen from the dead, not to die again, his soul and body cannot be separated; so that he who receives it under one kind only, or a particle of one kind, (as it was the custom of the primitive Church, to give it to children, to the sick and to the faithful, in times of persecution) receives as much as he who receives it under the whole of both species.

That the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ are more than sufficiently satisfactory for our sins. That

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That the holy scriptures written by men inspired from God, contain not the words of men, but the word of God, which can *save our souls*. Jam. i, 21. and, as such, must be read and meditated upon, by every one of the faithful, but with a due submission to the Catholic Church, to which it belongs to point out to us its true sense, with the same certainty with which she declared it to be revealed by the Holy Ghost, when first collected into books.

That every thing that Jesus Christ did and said, not being written, John xxi, 25, traditions taught, preached and delivered, as the word of Christ, and received and believed as such, *by all the faithful*, generally speaking, *in all ages and without interruption*, must be, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, 2 Thess. ii, 14, assented to, with equal faith, as the written ones.

That there is a third place he calls

Purgatory

Purgatory; where departed souls, not free from every kind of debts due to the justice of God, or guilty of sins unrepented of, but not deserving eternal punishment, are purged and purified before their admittance into Heaven; and that such suffering souls may be released by the holy sacrifice, the prayers, alms deeds and other pious works of their fellow members here on earth.

That there is a Purgatory, is plainly intimated by our Lord, Matt. xii, 32, when he says, *he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come;* by which words, Christ supposes that, though these shall not, yet some sins shall be forgiven in the world to come; which, since it cannot be in Heaven, where no sin can enter, nor in Hell, where there is no remission, must be necessarily, in some middle state: the same is argued from

these words of S. Paul, 1 Cor, iii, 15,
He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire:
also from the practice of the Jews,
2 Mac. xii, 43.

Lastly, that there is a power in the Church of granting *indulgences*, by which nothing more is meant, than a releasing, to such as are truly penitent, the debt of temporal punishment which (witness King David, 2 Sam. xii, 10.) may remain due on account of those sins, which, as to the guilt and eternal punishment, have been already remitted by repentance and confession. Convinced of this truth, the Church of God, besides the hearty repentance and confession insisted upon, for the discharge of the guilt of sin, always required from the beginning, severe penances for the discharge of the temporal punishment. We have an instance of St. Paul granting an indulgence to the incestuous Corinthian, when he said, 2 Cor. ii, 10 *To whom*

ye forgive any thing, I forgive also, for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ.

Such is, Sir, the faith of the Roman Catholic; if I have omitted any article of it, or not explained to your satisfaction those I have laid down, I will readily repair the omission, when known, and enter, upon all, into any detail you may wish for;

I am with sincere respect, Sir,

M. J. B. B.

LETTER

FROM G. W. TO M. J. B. B.

April 20th, 1797.

Sir,

IF the belief of the Roman Catholic is such as you represent, I have been much deceived, for my ideas upon it, are very different; and, to speak

speak my true sentiments, I think you shew me only one part of the picture : Let it be as it may, my observations and objections shall point out to you, where I think it flattered and unlike, without objecting to what I approve.

I am of your opinion, that the article of the Church and her authority, ought to be the preliminary and basis of our discussion, as it resolves many questions which, for want of authority, would remain insoluble. Your notions on this head, have my perfect approbation : they shew me the Church such, as I confess, I have never viewed it before. I am not offended then at her infallibility, and see evidently the necessity for all Christians to submit to her decisions. The misfortune is, that many people, more zealous than wise, very often give as her decisions, what are not so, and thus hurt the cause of religion, while attempting to serve it ; I shall probably have occasion

occaſion to return to this article.

Your doctrine of sacraments offers nothing but consolation to men; and in case it were not true, I could wish it was. I shall hereafter have opportunity to make some objections on the ſubject, which I ſincerely desire you will answer in a ſatisfactory manner.

The Roman Catholic, you ſay, adores *one God* in three persons, and adores *him only*: what then do you do before your ſtatues and images, ſurrounded with flambeaux and ornaments, if you do not adore them? I do not know in what adoration conſists, or I ſhould ſuppoſe, when I ſee a man proſtrated before an image, that he is paying adoration to it. What do you do on Good Friday, on your knees before a cross you cover with kisses? Surely you will not ſay you do not pay it adoration; for I have myſelf

heard

heard Roman Catholics say, that on that day, they *adore the cross*.

You likewise say the Roman Catholic believes that we are all saved by the passion and death of Jesus Christ, that he is our only mediator. Of what signification then are your invocations to saints? What signify those prayers you address to the Virgin in all your books of devotion; where you call her, *your life, your hope*, where you pray her to bestow on you *purity of life*? Why does the service of your Church consist more in prayers to saints, than to God? I am told, that when in your religion, the feast of a saint happens on a Sunday, you perform the office of the saint, in preference to that of God! Can any thing be more absurd? Is it not placing the Servant before the Master?

Attracted by your singing, I have sometimes entered your chapels, on a Sunday

Sunday afternoon, and as I understand a little Latin, I have once had patience (which otherwise I should not) to listen to long anthems addressed to saints, at the end of which I thought we should never arrive ; I was near a man who, without comprehending them, appeared to me to follow them in his book very exactly ; he had the goodness to hold it open between us, refering me with his finger to each in turn, without passing by a single one ; and yet you say, you acknowledge *only one mediator, Jesus Christ !* In truth, Sir, you will not easily make me believe this.

These observations naturally bring me to another I cannot avoid making ; you know without doubt, that I intend speaking of the language in which you recite your service : it appears to me indeed very ridiculous to pretend to honour God, by repeating words we do not understand : of such it may be properly said, they honour him only with

with their lips. I do not know, Sir, whether you understand Syriac; but supposing you do not; what would you say, were you obliged to recite in that language, during an hour and more, words, you are informed, compose a fine prayer? If the merit of prayer was in proportion to the repugnance one has to overcome, in saying it, mine, I assure you, would be very great; for nothing is more painful to me, than to be obliged to read what I cannot comprehend: I would wish to know how you explain, on this subject, 1 Cor. xiv, not to see in it your own condemnation.

I once had the curiosity to go to your Mass, when I had been told you preached in Latin; I was agreeably undeceived in this point, for I heard in English, a very good sermon, which appeared to me as solid, as well delivered; but I was more than ever convinced of the ridiculous abuse I had before

before been offended at. I was never more surprised than to see ministers (whom I imagine also to be priests) reading, or rather singing to their hearers their duty and obligations *in a tongue unknown to them:* seriously, Sir, such things must be seen, to gain belief.

Upon my observing it once to a Gentleman of your persuasion, he told me, the assistants had a translation of the Latin in their books: very well, replied I; but those who know not how to read, or who have not a book (though I do not see why what can be read so, could not as well be sung) what edification can they receive from the Latin you chant to them? Not the least, surely: O but returned he, the sermon that is made afterwards, explains this to them: supposing it to be so, cried I (though the sermon I heard after, was neither on the gospel nor on the epistle of the day) at least you cannot deny that

D all

this reading and chanting, in an unknown tongue, is thrown away, without procuring any glory to the Deity, or edification to the ignorant who, were they condemned to tell their dry beads during that time, could do it better at home undisturbed by your chanting. Sir, replied he quickly, the Church is wise and has her reasons for maintaining the custom you blame. I should have been glad to know where such an attribute is warranted to your ecclesiastic legislators, not believing that, because Jesus Christ said to his disciples (and I grant it, to their successors) he would be with them to the end of the world, they may, by any means, from thence infer that their future deeds shall always be wise and good, the words of Jesus Christ, as before explained by you, signifying only, that he will not permit error to take place of the truths he had revealed to his Church; but, as my gentleman seemed rather displeased with

with my questions and arguments, I thought proper to stop, adding only with a smile, that such a reasoning was unanswerable.

As to what they say, that it is better to have the liturgy every where in Latin, for that it is a dead invariable tongue, and any Catholic travelling, is sure to find, wherever he goes, the mass said in the same idiom, is a very poor reason indeed, importing in total, that it is better a travelling man be every where ignorant of what every where he hears, than to understand it at home, with millions who never travel. When Latin was generally more known, in the West, than any other tongue, and was spoken in common discourse, fit it was that the mass and other offices of the Church were said in Latin: now that it is no more so, no longer ought they to be said in that language.

1 What you have said on the Eucharist, is certainly very incomprehensible; however, as we acknowledge ourselves in the sacrament, the energy and virtue of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which is not easier to comprehend, nor less mysterious, I am not much against the sense you apply to the text in St. Luke; and indeed, to say the truth, I should have little difficulty to reconcile myself to this article of your belief, which I see founded on authority, and very different from the idea I have hitherto entertained. I will not conceal it from you; I believed (and so do many others) that you were, on this occasion, guilty of idolatry; but as soon as your adoration is directed to *Jesus Christ only*, whom faith unveils to you under species void of reality, the case is altered, and though the denying a reality of substance to the species after the consecration, be never so contradictory to our senses; yet, as they may deceive us, when the finger of God

God intervenes, the authority on which you think they now do it, being once unquestionable, there remains nothing to object to, we must of course be silent and adore. In fact, were we to believe only what we can comprehend, the mystery of incarnation, wherein Almighty God in one of the three persons composing his essence, consented to die, to the end, we might as well say, of appeasing himself, is no less, is much more incomprehensible than this.

But what I cannot say, I approve, though unable to refute, is the communion under one kind only, which ever has been the practice of the Church in the time you mention, taking the sacrament under both species, seems to me required by the institution itself, in which both were made use of; and I could wish at least that exceptions should only take place in the cases you have related.

I have often heard, on these words of Jesus Christ, *do this in remembrance of me*, objections against the real presence, to which I should be glad to see your answer; certain it is that one seems contradictory to the other; and if I do not make any myself, it is because the texts you cite, as proofs of your sentiment, appear to me to say more, than those who argue from the above against it, would have them signify.

You see, Sir, I am even with you in frankness; and these concessions of mine, ought to be a pledge to you of my sincerity, when I am of an opinion different to yours.

However clear the text may be, you quote to prove the existence of the sacrament of penance, (of which by the bye, I could wish confession was not made a necessary part) yet it leaves matter for objections, I think hard to resolve.

resolve. Your doctrine on this subject is perfectly known to me: you say that the priest remits sins to those, who sincerely repenting, and forming a determined resolution to amend and carefully to shun in future the occasion of committing them, make of them an entire confession to him: very well; but it seems to me that the remission can never be other than conditional; the priest is supposed to say: I remit your sins, if you are in the above said disposition; but as no one can answer affirmatively he is in such a disposition, it follows that the sacrament gives no assurance to the penitent that his sins are remitted; and all the benefit he gets by receiving it (which however is not a contemptible one) is confined to the good resolution he adopts by the advice of his confessor, and to the means pointed out to him, of amending and living a better life in future. All that he can say to himself, is, that he hopes

God

God has forgiven him the sins he has confessed, which every contrite penitent may as well say without confession; at least the one has no more assurance of it than the other. I have been always struck with these objections, when reflecting upon that sacrament, the existence of which can scarcely be denied.

What you say about the scripture, appears to me the more reasonable, as we have in this country a striking instance of the ill consequences resulting from the liberty every one claims, of interpreting it after his own private judgment: we reckon in England, more than 30 translations of the Bible, all of them more or less different from one another, in points of importance. Surely no authority, but that which could infallibly ascertain its authenticity, ought to be allowed to determine and point out its true sense.

I likewise

I likewife agree with you, as to the authority you give to the unwritten tradition; such as you define it, it commands our faith; but when I see people disputing to the utmost of their strength, to maintain as faith, points grounded only upon the opinion of this or that holy father, an opinion which other circumstances might have led him to give up or retract, witness St. Augustine who, out of an excess of zeal, often went beyond the right bounds of truth, I sincerely pity them, and heartily lament the injury which, through a pious stubbornness, they offer to religion they intend to serve.

Whatever be the authorities you ground your doctrine of purgatory upon, I doubt whether they really come to the purpose, or, as they say, *ad rem*; I have read somewhere, that the holy fathers are far from being unanimous on the import of the texts you quote, some pretending that the words of St.

34 *Epiſtolary diſcuſſion on Religion.*

St. Matthew are to be understood, as the *impossibility* there is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, which signifies only *a very great difficulty*; so that, when it is said that the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, *neither in this world, neither in the world to come*, we must understand that such a sin is hardly to be forgiven: Besides, the sin mentioned in that text, is a sin to be *forgiven*, which is not upon purgatory, the doctrine of your Church that teaches souls are detained in it, for a temporal punishment, due to *sins forgiven.*

It is the same with the words of St. Paul, *He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire*, some holy fathers expounding them of the wicked in hell, who are said to be saved by fire, in as much as they always subsist and continue in flames, and are not destroyed by them.

As to the books of Macabees which
we

we account apocryphal, they are not in this place, of authority to be submitted to; therefore, considering the above different interpretations, your doctrine of purgatory cannot be ascertained, but by the authority of the Church, by which I would rather abide, if you can shew me it stands proved, as it ought to be, by her belief.

You will perhaps find me hard to please; but I began by informing you probabilities would not satisfy me: if I am not mistaken, your doctrine of purgatory, is much indebted for its credit, to the zeal which, for some ages past, priests have shewn, in hourly saying masses for which they were well paid, for the delivery of souls they supposed there detained.

I am not ignorant of what is reported of St. Augustine, that he said mass for the repose of the soul of his mother; on which I will not tell you it seems
not

not a little surprising, that prior to the time of St. Augustine, no other instance of the same is produced; but I could ask you, to shew me how far this act of St. Augustine is a proof of purgatory; whether he offered the sacrifice of the mass with a known intention that manifests his faith in that respect; for it may be that his action was no more a proof of his belief in purgatory, than the service of the dead performed by our Church which denies it.

Indulgencies, understood as you explain them by the instance you quote, are, Sir, very different from those I heard granted by the Popes. I am willing to own that the Church has really the right you here attribute to her: if she cannot be denied the power we see her exercising of imposing penances of many years, she must have, by the same reason, that of moderating them, when the fear
of

of throwing him into despair by too much rigour, (as was the case with the incestuous Corinthian) induces her to do so; but it is not only with those canonical pains your church pretends to dispense, it is particularly (or I am misinformed) with those of purgatory which your Popes, for any purpose of theirs, remit by days, months and years, though ignorant whether one shall have more to suffer than the good thief! I have even read in a book of yours, that she has the power of remitting all the temporal satisfaction due to God, after the sins are remitted as to the eternal one. Surely, Sir, this is a strange privilege, and I would be glad to know whence your Church has it. Granting that the scripture accords a power to the Church, of remitting sins, I see nowhere that God has likewise given her that of dispensing with the satisfaction due to his justice by the sinner, whose sins he has been so good to forgive as to the eternal punishment they deserved.

The caſe of the prophet David cited as a proof of the ſatisfaction due after ſin is forgiven as to the guilt, appears to me a very curious instance of it, as it seems to authorize the concluſion that God has alſo given to the Church the power of dispensing with the ſufferings, the penitent King had to bear, after he had heard from Na- than that his ſin was forgiven; for, to be ſure, otherwife the comparison will not only be, as they ſay every com- paſſion is, *lame*, but quite *legless*: and why, if it be ſo, ſhould ſhe not have alſo the power of dispensing with death which is another punishment of ſin *forgiven*? but credulity could not here be imposed upon: facts would ſpeak, while in the other caſe, it ſuffices to give them as certain, without being obliged to prove them to be ſo.

As a complement on the above in- vention, I have been alſo told that the ſtock of your indulgences was com-

composed not only of the merits of Christ, but of superabundant merits in certain saints, as if God could not reward by his divers heavenly mansions, all they may have, and there was a remainder to be disposed of; but this is an absurdity I never believed.

There is a law in your Church I can by no means pass over in silence, it seems to me so contrary to the very text of scripture; I mean the prohibition made to your clergymen of marrying, if they think it necessary to the salvation of their souls; for I could wish with St. Paul, that he who is in the ministry of the altar, had never reasons to enter into a state, the duties of which oblige him to divide himself; but I wish it, as he does, on condition that he be not deprived of the liberty God allows him, if he cannot contain; and, as St. Paul says he has no precept, I have been always greatly surprized to see your Church making

40 *Epistolary discussion on Religion.*

making one to a class of men she would exclude the sanctuary, where Heaven may call them, were they to refuse to submit to it. The marks of vocation to priesthood, are without doubt recorded in St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy and Titus; but pray in what part of them have you ever read that in order to be a priest, a man should renounce being a man? The apostle has not here a command of the Lord; and you, teaching another Gospel, you issue out one harder to observe than any he has!

But, you say, you are not obliged to make yourself a priest: who told you so? If God to whom alone it belongs to call us, as he did Aaron, calls me to the altar, am I not obliged to obey? Has he any where authorized you to oppose his will, by conditions you have no right to prescribe? your power of making disciplinary laws must stop where you would add to the yoke of Christ; and you are forbidden

in particular, to make any that may be the ruin of souls which otherwise might be saved.

The looseness of your clergy in France, of which no one is ignorant, should long since have convinced your ecclesiastic legislators, of the impropriety of forbidding priests to marry. Without speaking of the Capital, where many bishops and abbots were famous for their intrigues, I have been told that the incontinence of your lower clergy in the provinces, was little less scandalous, and created greater obstacles to the sanctification of souls, than examples to the contrary could overcome.

Wanting scripture authority to forbid priests to marry, you pretend to silence your contradic^tors, by saying the Church is *wise*. First of all, I know not what you mean, when you say the Church is *wise*. Surely you do not

mean, as I before observed, that your ecclesiastic lawgivers can make none but wise laws? I expressed it to you, I am not offended at the infallibility of the Church, such as you explain it: it has a determinate object which is, that in matters of *faith* and *morality*, she shall never consecrate error: for *revealed truth*, by her decisions; but, where is it written that her laws of discipline, the goodness of which is not warranted by God, shall always be impressed with the stamp of wisdom? No where that I know: but the cunning is invisible to those only who will not see it: your legislators, to persuade you that their laws are all wise, and as such, to be revered, have contrived the assertion; and credulous simplicity struck with what is awful in it, has, for want of distinguishing between them and the infallible Church, been induced to believe that, by blindly submitting to their bigotted inventions they obeyed Christ himself. It is a pity they

they have not also been able always to persuade the world of their omnipotence ; that they had the power of disposing of crowns, on the fine argument that he who has a dominion over the noblest things, namely *human souls*, must have it over less noble, *earthly kingdoms* ; or on this other, that they are assured all they will loose, shall be loosed, and that all they will bind, shall be bound ; and as the word *all* excepts nothing, they could of course loose the ties that bind subjects to their sovereign, a man to a man, and *vice versa* bind them ; the plea was certainly full as good, and the consequence in every respect as well drawn. It is, Sir, by such equivocations of words, people are imposed upon, and truth has in time been so disguised in your Church, as to make half of Europe desert her.

Another argument of theirs, in support of this their invention, no less, if

if not more curious, is the following : the ministers of the altar, under the old law, were, they say, obliged to part with their wives, during the exercise of their functions ; well ; therefore it is a crime for priests under the new one, to be married ! Happy reasoning ! the former were also circumcised : if the old covenant is not done away, so are the latter to be ! *rism teneatis amici.*

But they moreover say, upon the sentiment, I know not which holy father, who was pleased piously to advance it, as his opinion (though in many other cases they do not think the opinion of more than one to be a sufficient authority to argue from it as a law), that the apostles who were married, were obliged to part with their wives.

I do not know how they understand these words of the apostle of the Gentiles

ties, 1. Cor. ix, *Have we not power to lead about a sister (and not to say a wife) a woman, as well as other apostles and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas;* but unless these women sisters were the apostles' wives, the wives of that time were indeed very different from ours; for I am pretty sure that those of our days, though never so pious and devout, could not brook seeing their husbands lead so about, with them, any other women, even on a similar errand. The patrons of this assertion should besides remember that the same apostle forbids such a parting, or permits it only for a time, and with the consent of both parties: this being no more than a counsel, very possible it is that the consorts of some of the apostles would have been satisfied with doing well, without aiming at doing better; but the ridiculous contrivance must be maintained at any rate.

And why would it be a crime for priests

priests to marry? Is it because matrimony is an union that would tarnish the purity they must carry to the altar? But matrimony is honourable: matrimony in your Church, is even one of the sacraments of the new law, one of those mysterious sources from whence, say your divines, that salutary water springs, which quickens our souls. Without matrimony the world emerging out of nothing, was going again into nothing; it supports, it perpetuates its existence, it is the soul of creation, the work of which it crowns, and celibacy is its death.

They talk of inconveniences resulting from the marriage of priests: but in truth, is it from the matrimony of priests that the inconveniences talked of, arise? Believe me, Sir, they have a very different cause; when those honours, distinctions and riches with which you flatter and engage the ambition of your clergy, whom the hope

of

being in the church, what they cannot be in the world, *rich* and *honoured*, persuades that the abnegation you prescribe them, is not above their strength, or should it be, that they will be furnished with means to recompense themselves in private, for the sacrifice they make in public; when I say, honours and riches shall be no longer an object of expectation, a determining motive in becoming a priest; when, let them be what they may, married or single, men having, like Timothy studied the holy scriptures *from their infancy*, shall be called to the altar by the votes and desires of the faithful, with no other hopes, than those given by Jesus Christ to his apostles, be certain that no inconveniences will result from the marriage of priests; why do I say *inconveniences*? Far, very far from it: a modest and discreet wife, children subject with all chastity, dependants submissive and respectful will be as many examples the minister of Christ

Christ sets up to me by the precepts, which render to all virtue amiable, and preach it with a pleasing and irresistible voice:

It is but too true that such ministers as I have described, will be unlike our present doctors and preachers; (for the abuse I here complain of, is not so peculiarly applicable to your Church, as not to disgrace ours also) they will not aim at puzzling their hearers with unintelligible and unheard of words; they will not mystically expatiate on indifferent subjects, scarcely mentioning those chiefly intended to promote the glory of God, by improving our morals; no; but they will be masters of the science by which saints are made; they will know and teach that of St. Paul, *Christ crucified.*

You expect, without doubt, Sir, that the abuse of your monastic vows will not pass unensured; but, pray, mark

mark that I say the *abuse*, for I should not be understood, if you took it, as my condemning all vows; no, Sir, I am on the contrary persuaded that vows might be an honour to religion and the glory of the Church; they might perpetuate under our eyes the practice of evangelical counsels, and present to our edification patterns of virtue, which, by making us ashamed not to fulfil the precept, would at least inspire us with the desire of doing it. By the *abuse* of monastic vows, I understand those vows you obtain by allurements, from innocent creatures who do not know themselves, of dying, to speak so, before they are born; of resisting, all their life long, inclinations enforced by deprivation, and renouncing for ever enjoyments imagination magnifies and endears, and but too often represents as supreme happiness; I understand those vows inspired by disappointment, provoked indignation, real or fancied displeas-

F sures;

sures ; I understand those vows which are made to secure to one self in a convent, without pain, a subsistence despained of, in the world ; in fine, I understand those vows which family dispositions and settlements force upon an unfortunate child, ill used by nature and disliked, to increase the portion of a sister, endowed with its gifts, and adored.

Vows so inconsiderate and inspired by such motives, render but too credible what is reported of the discord and divisions that are said to exist in convents, of their parties and factions, antipathies and pretensions assumed from family and difference of name, the riches or high stations of relations. I do not then wonder at what they say, that they are there as vain as in the world, proud, sensual and selfish. It is a natural and necessary consequence of the motives they have been actuated by, in choosing a state
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of life. Are your convents of men otherwise composed and more edifying? You know it better than I do.

Shall I tell you now, Sir, the vows I not only approve, but would encourage? They are annual ones; to say more, I am sorry there is not in every Christian country, asylums where, secured and assited by such vows, preserved innocence could provide precautions against the snares of the world, and lost innocence be repaired. We are not tempted to break through engagements that end with the year, and the liberty we know we shall have at that period, destitute of the charms prohibition gives it, is not an advantage we think preferable to the delights with which God remunerates the sacrifice even in this world. I should have only one apprehension, which is, that few of those virtuous recluses would, after tasting how sweet is the Lord, enter again

into society, to edify us with their acquired virtues, in a state they are before all called to.

I have been told that most of your hospitals in France were under the direction of a congregation of women who engage themselves by annual vows to attend the sick, to whom they were like tender and indulgent mothers ; that they were mean while of all religious women the most servent as well as the most serviceable ; and that, however painful and loathsome their employ, it was very uncommon to see any of them return to the world. How I admire and respect these good and virtuous handmaids of the Lord ! What a difference between these nurses charity gives to the sick, and those our money procures them !

I could wish it was to such congregations the education of our daughters was likewise committed. Governesses
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in the habit of vanquishing themselves, speaking of the yoke of Christ which they should know from experience, might do it with a moving concern, and in a manner so impressive as to make it loved. They would continually place under the eyes of their pupils the example by the precept, and by their unqualified submission to voluntary engagements, teach them effectually that obedience imposed upon them by both divine and human laws, in a state wherein it is made indispensable.

I must tell you, Sir, in this respect all my mind and desires. Were not at the same time, religious duties as well attended to, these precious associations would be still deficient. Work in them should prepare for prayer, and prayer for work; but, as you may well imagine, I would not have prayer said in a tongue when the lips could speak nothing to the heart: it should not consist (which I always

thought superlatively absurd) in the daily recitation of an endless breviary where unfortunate creatures have not even the small consolation to find in a known language what they are obliged, *under pain of sin*, to say in an unknown one; no: their religious code would be the expression of their heart, their covenant with their God; and in this their book, fitted to their situation, they might daily be impressed with a sense of their happiness and obligations.

Although I do not like your legends, most of them being a collection of pious stories and contrived miracles more calculated to amuse children than to improve others, I should not be against perusing for edification, the life of such as have been distinguished by their virtues in the same career.

Pleased with ideas, never perhaps to be realised, to the misfortune of many, pray, suffer me, Sir, to indulge

indulge a little longer my innocent fancies. In order to be admitted into those congregations, the persons should pay with industry for their maintenance, because neither portions nor pensions should be received, as, by the privileges they give, the intended purpose would be frustrated. Their vows being at an end, they should have the liberty to quit the congregation or to renew them; but, except in certain premised cases, the congregation could not dismiss any one, and should be obliged to find them every possible comfort, both in health and sickness.

Christian perfection being the motive of such associations, there would be no fear selfishness and private interest could disquiet them. Each member once furnished with the only things wanted, *food and raiment*, the remainder of the common stock, if any, should be a fund with which charity would

would not fail helping the indigent.

With as much facility, congregations of men might be formed, equally edifying and serviceable. I was, for example, ever of opinion, that the instruction of youth in our colleges should be entrusted to societies of men who would so devote themselves to it by annual vows: no comparison can ever be made between instructors afforded by religion, and those interest or any other human consideration may procure. Besides the many allurements inherent to teaching, (notwithstanding the pain it gives) the opportunity of being instructed by instructing, exemption from earthly cares, the guiltless pleasures of an ever-pleasing and innocent society are well known motives, which would infallibly fill those peaceful retreats with saints and learned men who might be an honour to religion and an ornament to the world.

I should

I should no less approve associations formed by repentance, where penitent sinners could enter again into themselves, expiate, with tears of penance, the dissoluteness of a life spent in criminal pleasures: but still on condition that manual labour should supply the wants of nature.

Such are, Sir, the vows I approve; but surely those your Church recommends and patronises, make few people happy, many miserable, and in every respect do incomparably more evil than good.

This is, Sir, a very long letter, and yet I could still prolong it, there being many more abuses in your religion I have been silent upon; but I am afraid to trespass on your time. Your answer to my objections will be the rule I shall be governed by as to what remains to be said.

I have

I have approved, disapproved, censured: now you will be pleased to say, whether I am right or wrong; but I have spoken my true sentiments, and let, your judgement be what it may, I shall not be the less,

Sir, your's &c,

G. W.

LETTER

FROM M. J. B. B. TO G. W.

May 27, 1797.

Sir,

IN order to be as concise as possible, I will omit stating here your objections; they will be sufficiently recalled to your mind, by my answers.

The Roman Catholic adores neither statues nor images: the candles and ornaments with which he is seen to surround

furrend them, are but marks of the regard he has for those they repreſent; neither does he adore *the cross* on Good Friday, but Jesus Christ only who was nailed on one. If in that case he makes uſe of the word *adore*, it is to point out that he who died on the cross, and whom he adores is *adorable*; as, when ſpeaking of the reverence he pays to ſtatues and images, he uſes the word *honour*, to indicate that thoſe they repreſent, are deserving honour.

The Roman Catholic acknowledges Christ *only* for the mediator of his re-demption, and hopes *only* in him. If he invokes the blessed virgin, saints and angels, it is not to ask of them graces that *can ſave our ſouls*, but only their interceſſion by him who alone can give them, being taught by his Church *it is good and profitable* to invoke them,* for that they may help him

* Council of Trent.

in obtaining those he stands in need of. The words he directs to the blessed virgin, when he calls her *his life*, *his hope*, have no other meaning in his mouth, than the same in that of a man who desiring a favour from a great personage, would say to him he should imagine capable through his credit, of obtaining it for him; *you are my life*, that is in other words, the favour I wish for, in which my happiness is wrapt up, depends on you, on the pains I beg you will take in order to obtain it for me; *you are my hope*, that is to say, if I do not succeed through your assistance, I have no other hope to succeed in it.

Every body understands the meaning of those words which, far from being an injury to the bestower of the favour, recommend so much more the petitioner to him, as they express his humility, and the profound respect he has for him whom he dares not to approach but through the mediation of

of his friends: so did the good Centurion of the gospel, who conscious of his unworthiness, durst not himself apply to Jesus, and sent to him the Elders amongst the Jews, as more acceptable to him, *desiring him to come and heal his servant, which they begged of him earnestly, saying to him, he is one that deserveth thou shouldest do this for him.* Luke vii, 8.

In the very same manner and sense, the Roman Catholic requests a *pure life* from the blessed virgin, entreating her to procure it, by asking for him graces that can make it so.

How Saints and Angels know the prayers and necessities of such as make address to them, is no part of his faith, nor much his concern it should be determined: he sees in St. Luke, xv, 7, that they *rejoice over one sinner that does penance;* they are then, he justly concludes, acquainted

with what passes here upon earth: that is all he wants to know.

It would be perhaps to be wished, that, out of charity for the weak and ignorant, some other expressions, the meaning of which could by nobody be mistaken, were substituted to those you have here objected to; but such is their import and signification, so they are understood by the Roman Catholic.

There is nothing, however good, that is not in time abused: the observation you make, that the service of Saints occupies more room in our prayer-books than it ought to do, is perhaps but too well grounded. I am likewise of your opinion that, notwithstanding the final intention of the Roman Catholic, who, on any festival of Saints, always makes God *the ultimate object of all his petitions*, it should seem better, the festival of a saint happening

happening on Sunday, to omit the service of the Saint, or make only a commemoration of him.

Though the commemorations of saints which the good Roman Catholic offered to your reading in his book, were never so numerous, you certainly did not see in any of them, that he called upon Saints as *Mediators* of his salvation, which you should prove, to ground your present objections against the doctrine of his Church: yet I will grant it to you: the public divine service should rather be less prolonged than it is commonly with commemorations of Saints, unknown to most of the congregation.

As to the tongue in which we perform our Church offices, though there are several good reasons for it, nevertheless, considering the inconveniences you have so *severely* noticed, one cannot but wish, it was otherwise ordered;

I should think it the more desirable, as the innovations, a translation could possibly introduce, might be prevented, by ordering the text to be printed by the translation, and none to be admitted but with the approbation of the Church wherein they are to be used. Such a precaution once taken, translations might as well be read to, and sung by the assistants, as they are read in their books by people who do not understand Latin, and to the edification too of those who know not how to read.

You think the sacrament should be administered under both kinds, and the reason you give for it, is, that its institution was made under the species of wine, as well as under that of bread.

It is true that this sacrament was instituted under one and the other emblem, as it were to say to our senses, that Jesus Christ is made our food

food in it, which does not consist only of eating, but also of drinking; but, as it is a spiritual food, the whole of which we believe to be under one, as well as under the other, nothing remaining of bread and wine but appearances, after the consecration, the authority that submits our senses to his words *in obsequiousness of faith*, forbids condemning the practice you disapprove as contrary to its institution. The essence of that sacrament depending no more on the taking both species, than on the quantity of either those of your persuasion think proper to take, when they believe that he who takes but little of each, receives the same as he who takes much, the wish for receiving both kinds, notwithstanding what faith teaches, is but human, and only that of our senses, which we are not here allowed to consult.

It is well known that it was the
G3 practice

practice of the Church for the first 400 years after Christ, to communicate under one kind only, or else under both, as every one thought good; and the first precept of receiving under both kinds was given to the faithful by Pope Leo I. in the year 443, and confirmed by Pope Gelasius in 490, not for the correcting of any abuse crept into the church, but for the discovering of the Manichees, who being of opinion that Christ had no true blood, and wine was the gall of the devil, used to lurk amongst the Christians, and receiving under the species of bread only as others did, remained undistinguished. The cause of this injunction being afterwards removed, by the ceasing of that sect of heretics, the faithful had as before, the liberty of taking the sacrament under one or both kinds; and conscious they received as much under the species of *bread only*, as under the species of *bread and wine*, they were ever

ever since universally satisfied to take it so, until a new doctrine starting on this subject, made it necessary for the Church to promulgate an explicit declaration of her faith.

Besides, the words of Christ himself, give sufficiently to understand that he who takes the sacrament under one kind only, receives as much as he who takes it under both; *If any man, says he, eats of this bread, he shall live forever: again, he that eats me, even he shall live by me: he that eats of this bread, shall live forever,* John vi, 52, 58, 59. Had the taking both kinds been necessary to the end of the institution, surely Jesus Christ would have spoken in a different manner. The same doctrine is to be found, Luke xxiv, 30, Acts ii, &c. there being as many texts in the scripture for thus receiving under one kind, as under both.

I cannot on this occasion, omit
taking

taking notice of the words you make use of in your Church; when speaking of the sacrament of the altar, you call it the *Lord's supper*: I think, Sir, the appellation wrong, as there is no question here of the supper our Lord eat with his disciples, the day before he was put to death, but of the sacrament he instituted after that supper, and of which he did not himself partake.. see Luke xix. 20 Cor. xi, 25. it would be besides not a little ridiculous to say, that the Lord eat his own body, / in what manner soever it be understood.

It is not very difficult, Sir, to answer the objection made by those who from these words of St. Luke xxii 19, *Do this in remembrance, or commemoration of me,* would have it, that the Eucharist is nothing more than a mere remembrance of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ: in effect what is the import of the text where we read
these

these words? How does it run? *When he had taken bread, he gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, this is my body, do this in commemoration of me.* What *THIS*? Take bread, give thanks and break it: by your blessing it will be changed into my body which is, or shall be given for you: take likewise wine, and give thanks, saying, *this cup is the new testament in my blood,* and it shall be changed *into my blood which shall be shed for you:* you shall do *THIS in commemoration of me;* that is, by the virtue of your blessing which I will make efficacious, so you shall change, *in a spiritual manner,* bread and wine *into my body and blood;* so you shall take both, thinking of me who am to offer up both, a sacrifice for you on the cross; for it must be observed, that Jesus Christ does not say to his disciples to *remember,* or to *make a commemoration of him;* but to do what he had just done *in commemoration of him,* which is quite different.

This

This objection has been insisted upon, by saying, that there is no occasion for making a *commemoration* of what is present. No, certainly ; if the manner of being present, is the same in one and the other case; but if it is different, nothing opposes it; now the manner, for Christ, of being present in the Eucharist is totally different from that he was in, when sacrificed for us; therefore there is not any contradiction in making a *commemoration* of one by the other.

The doing by the Apostles, of that which they were ordered by Jesus Christ to do, is saying what goes by the name of *mass*; on which, it is to be noticed, that the manner of saying it, though not different as to its essential parts, is now very much so, as to those that are not : we see in the history of the primitive Church that it consisted only, at that time, in saying *the Lord's prayer, the consecration*

tion of the species of bread and wine, the receiving of the sacrament, and thanksgiving; so that what more is now a day to be found in it, was afterwards added; as for instance, the names of certain martyrs that were first mentioned in the celebration of the divine mysteries, and afterwards taken into the book of the mass.

It may not perhaps be amiss to relate here the words and reasoning of Luther on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. They deserve so much more attention, as he cannot be suspected of favouring what they call the *superstitions* of the Church of Rome.

" " What (says Luther, tom. vii. ed- Wittemb. p. 391) " but the devil, " has granted such a licence of wrest- " ing the words of the holy scrip- " ture? Who ever read in the scrip- " tures that *my body* (he speaks to the
Calvinists

vinists) “is the same as the *sign* of my
“body? Or that is, is the same as it
“signifies? What language ever spoke
“so? It is only then the devil that im-
“poseth upon us, by those fanatical
“men...not one of the fathers, though
“so numerous, ever spoke as the Sa-
“cramentarians: not one of them ever
“said, *it is only bread and wine*, (Luther
held what is called *impanation*) “or
“*the body and blood of Christ is not there*
“*present*: surely it is not credible, nor
“possible, since they often speak and
“repeat their sentiments, that they
“should never, (if they thought so,)
“not so much as *once* say, or let slip
“these words: *it is bread only*, or *the*
“*body of Christ is not there* especially, it
“being of great importance that men
“should not be deceived. Certainly,
“in so many fathers, and in so many
“writings, the *negative* might, at least,
“be found in *one of them*, had they
“thought the body and blood of Christ
“were not *really present*; but they
“are

"are all of them unanimous." So far Luther.

It is not a little surprising that, while he so well asserts the *real presence* of Christ in the Eucharist, Luther does, at the same time, so grossly mistake the manner, in contradiction with the very words he quotes to prove it; for, to say that *THIS* signifies, *under or with this bread, is my body,* is no less to wrest the words of the scripture, than to say, *THIS* is the *sign of my body.* If Jesus Christ is to be believed on his word (which it is a blasphemy to deny) we must believe (and here lies the mystery) that by his all-powerfull blessing, he has, when speaking, now changed into his body and blood, what our sences apprehend to be still bread and wine.

Were not confession an indispensable part of the sacrament of penance, as it is proved to be, by the words themselves of its institution, (since in order

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to remit or retain sins, the minister of this sacrament must know them, and cannot know them, but by the confession of the sinner) I am so far from wishing the same with you, that, for the reason which moved a modern philosopher*, speaking of the existence of God, to say that, *was not God existing, he should be invented*, I should think the want of it, a deficiency in the divine Code. The great and many benefits derived from confession, place it amongst the most precious favours bestowed upon us by our heavenly benefactor: it restores the miserable sinner to that peace he was denied, composes the disordered mind, and endears again life to him, whom the sight of his crimes was driving into despair: the dejected feels his low spirits raised by it: in it, the unfortunate who groans under secret misfortunes, receives always comfort, and often temporal re-

* Voltaire.

lief

lief: it is the refuge of the flighted wife, and the distressed mother; there it is that the former learns how to bear with patience the scorn and ill usage of her cross unjust husband; the latter to comply with the will of God who is pleased to take from her a beloved son: There distracted parents for the loss of a dear child, gone astray, cease their bursting hearts, while they freely pour out their restrained affliction: the unhappy creature devoted to infamy by the vile artful seducer who robbed her of her innocence, finds still there, when abandoned by all, and cast away, a sympathizing friend, a kind and compassionate father; the weak and unexperienced youth, a necessary director, and old age its wanted support.

Your objection against our doctrine on this sacrament, (which is not unlike that you yourself profess in your book of common prayer, *visitation of the sick*) has been oftentimes made.

It is indeed specious, but it will seduce those only who do not rightly consider of the matter: the absolution given by the confessor to the penitent, is always *absolute*, though it operate but *conditionally*. What you say with respect to the sacrament of penance, might as well be said of that of baptism; it washes away the original sin in people grown up into the age of reason, who *believe* as the Eunuch of Queen Candace did; but, though its effect be *absolute*, yet it is only *conditionally* that the sin is effaced; it is only on condition that the receiver has *the faith required*, the want of which should oppose the receiving of it. *Acts viii, 37.*

But, you add, as no penitent can say he is in the disposition you require, he who receives it, is no more certain his sin is remitted, than he who does not: no more certain *metaphysically*; granted: no more certain *morally*, that is, has not incomparably better reasons

sions to hope it is so: I deny it. An assurance, such as to give to the penitent a perfect security, is not allowed even to the just; St. Paul fearful of being a reprobate, when preaching to others, who, though he is not conscious to himself of *any thing*, 1 Cor. iv, 4, dares not say he is justified, is an undeniable proof of it. After doing, with God's assistance, all that is in our power; after using every means of sanctification the sacraments afford us, we are still ignorant whether we are deserving *love or hatred*. What a penitent sinner, who wishes to be absolved, has to do, is to excite himself to the sentiments, that ensure the effect of absolution, earnestly petitioning to God for them; but to know to a certainty he has them, is another grace bestowed on few, to be expected by none, the less so, as such an assurance should seem incompatible with the doctrine of St. Paul who tells us, we must work our salvation *with fear and trembling*. Phil. ii, 12. G₃ I grant

I grant it, you, Sir, that the holy fathers are not unanimous on the signification of the texts called upon, to prove the existence of Purgatory; I know very well that St. Chrysostom and others, against St. Augustine and St. Gregory, understand the text of St. Mat. xii, 32, *it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come*, as the impossibility there is, for a rich man, to enter into Heaven, i.e. *of a great difficulty*; and the words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. iii, 15, *he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire*, were in the council of Florence interpreted by the Greek bishops, after the manner you say; but I know also the reply of those of the Latin Church, who justly opposed the interpretation, as not agreeable to the style of the scripture, where to be *saved*, both in the Latin and Greek Church, is understood to express the salvation and happiness of souls in Heaven.

As to the books of Maçabees, they ought not to lose any thing of their authority, for being rejected, as apocryphal, by your Church, after having been received as canonical for above 1300 years, by all the Christian world; witness the third council of Carthage, held in the year of our Lord 397, where they are accounted canonical books of the scripture and, as such, registered in the canon: also agreeably to the doctrine they contain, the constant belief and practice of the Catholic Church, by which you say, *you would rather abide, than by the texts I have quoted.*

Now that it is the belief of the Catholic Church, there is a Purgatory, where departed souls are to make a satisfaction to the justice of God, by a temporal punishment, after the forgiving of their sins as to the eternal one they deserved, is made unquestionable by the said council of Florence, when the Greek bishops who disagreed with those

of the Latin Church, on the interpretation of the texts spoken of, did however declare, they admitted as well as the latter, a third place, where souls guilty of lesser sins suffered for a time, till cleansed from such sins; allowing moreoyer, that the souls there detained from the vision of God, might be assissted by the prayers of the faithful.*

That the act of St. Augustine, offering the holy sacrifice for the repose of the soul of his mother, was not, at that time, a thing unheard of, is proved by uncontroulable testimonies.

We make, says Tertulian, *anniversary oblations for the dead.* Lib. de corona Militis. Cap. 3.

St. Epiphanius says, Sect. 8, p. 912,

* Council of Florence begun in 1438. see Labb. tom. 3, pag. 20; again, pag. 49, sess. 25; also the Defin of the council, pag. 515.

speaking

speaking of the practice of praying for the dead, that *the Church has this tradition from Christ.*

The Apostles, says St. Chrysostom, hom. 3, epist. ad Philip, did not in vain command these things, *that, in the venerable and dreadful mysteries, the dead should be remembered.*

We pray for all that die among us, says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catech. 5, pag. 241, *thinking it to be the greatest help that can be for their souls, to have the holy and dreadful sacrifice of the altar offered in supplication for them.*

That the action of St. Augustine was also a proof of his belief in Purgatory, and he offered, as it is reported he did, the holy sacrifice with the intention we suppose he had, is likewise put beyond all doubt, by what we read in a sermon of his, the 172, sect. 2; *by, the prayers of the holy Church says he,*
and

and the wholesome sacrifice and alms, it is not to be doubted but the dead are assisted.

Many more quotations as much to the purpose, might easily be made from the holy fathers; but, no doubt, you think it yourself, unnecessary-

In fact, reason itself convinces any thinking man of the reasonableness of this tenet of ours, I mean, the existence of a Purgatory; for unless it is said that every sin deserves an eternal punishment (which, *as there is no man that sinneth not*, 1 Kings, viii, 46, is an injury to the goodness of our heavenly Father,) or lesser sins unrepented of, do not prevent from entering heaven, (which contradicts the scripture, where we read that *God will render to every man according to his deeds*, Rom. ii, 6; and *nothing defiled shall enter into Heaven*. Rev. xxi, 27) there must necessarily be a third place, where souls departing this life with lesser sins unrepented

of

of, are to satisfy to God's justice, before their admittance into his kingdom.

How long is the punishment of venial offences to last after this life? God only knows; but if those, for whom our prayers are directed, are so miserable that they cannot be helped by them, or else so happy that they cannot want them, they shall not be lost; we are assured that our peace shall return to us, Matt. x, 13.

Abuses crept into the manner of granting indulgences, are not to be imputed to the faith of the Roman Catholic, neither are to be so, the erroneous notions ignorance may entertain about them, both which his Church reprobates and condemns. Your observations upon the case of King David I have quoted, do not at all invalidate the consequence hence following. David was guilty of sins deserving an eternal punishment: upon the

the repentance with which his very heart was broken, he is told by the prophet Nathan, that the Lord has put away his sin, intimating to him, at the same time, all the temporal punishments that awaited him, for despising his commandments, and doing evil in his sight; therefore there is a temporal satisfaction to be made to divine justice, after sins have been forgiven as to the eternal punishment they deserved. This is, to the purpose, all the consequence I draw from David's case, a consequence, the justness of which is certainly obvious.

As I have only our faith to vindicate to you, and what you have been told about a *superabundance* of merits in Saints, was never a part of it, I, by no means, require of you, to view it otherwise than you do.

Your observations upon the impropriety of the celibacy Priests are bound to

in our Church may be too well grounded. The promoters of the disciplinary law that prescribes it, had undoubtedly a commendable intention: they wished them to be angels-like, who angelical functions exercise; but considering its inconveniences, they had better perhaps been ruled by St. Paul's doctrine, satisfied with giving it as a counsel, not as a command.

However it may be, you know very well, Sir, this to be in our Church, no more than a point of discipline, which might be altered, as any other of the same kind, such as *the taking the Sacrament under one species only and the liturgy in Latin*, which, without doubt, you were yourself aware of; when, in your first letter, you told me carefully to distinguish between *dogmas* and *discipline*. Were this known to be as great an obstacle to the return of our misled brethren, to the Church, as I am well informed it is for many, I

I am

am persuaded, that faithful imitators of St. Paul, those it depends upon, to remove it, would instantly undertake the desired change.

Would to God your reflections upon monastical vows were entirely void of truth, and the aspersion convents lie under, had been always unmerited! A sort of life pointed out by St. Paul, as the best, would not have been so often reviled and laughed at, by a malignant world. No doubt, Sir, but vows inspired by such motives as you mention, can hardly be productive of effects different from those you have too well described. Sensible of the justice of your observations, I should not be less partial than you, to annual ones, with the only difference that, I do not see any inconvenience arising from biennial and triennial, in persons proved to be faithful to the first, for a series of years. It seems to me that the liberty of prolonging their duration, might

might be allowed in proportion as there would be less reason for fearing one was tempted to repent it. I should think such an allowance a kind of reward to tried virtue, apt to procure more and more the glory of God, and a greater edification to the sisterhood.

What you have been told with respect to the virtuous women, whom the direction of many of our hospitals was entrusted to, is most certainly true. I have been myself an eye-witness of the kind care with which the sick were by them fostered. It was such, that people furnished at their own home, with every other comfort of life, were in sickness begging, sometimes at any rate, admittance into their houses, for the advantage of being nursed by them.

I am likewise perfectly of your opinion, that both associations of men and women, moved by a desire of working out their own salvation, and

effectually serving their fellow creatures, would be, by all means, fitter to instruct youth in morality and sciences, than the best qualified individuals who undertake it, through interest, or any other motive besides that of religion: neither should I less approve of asylums afforded on the same plan and conditions, to repentant sinners. To how many unfortunate beings who die in despair, or final impenitence, would they not be the saving plank in a wreck, a port of refuge! I am pleased to think, Sir, that such praise-worthy desires that cannot originate but from a pure love of God and a true charity for our neighbour, will at last enter into the heart of those who have it in their power to see them executed.

It is perhaps, Sir, because I am delighted with the imagination; but I think a reconciliation between us far from being impossible: were we only to

to understand one another, I could answer for it. You own you had been imposed upon, with respect to our religious tenets ; that they had been misrepresented to you ; and pray, how many among our numerous prejudiced adversaries, might, better informed, own the same ! Ah would to God it was given me to contribute to undeceive them ! Were I to see the happy day, when acknowledging their error, they should return to the bosom of their afflicted Mother, ever ready to receive them, satisfied I would say as the just Simeon, *Now O Lord dismiss thy servant.* Luke ii, 29. Now I willingly depart this life.

This is, believe me, dear Sir, my hourly prayer to our common Father and God, which I am confident he will hear in his mercy. - The many virtues of humanity and charity you daily practise, and for which your name is every where commended, would not

be sufficiently rewarded by all the temporal blessings providence is pleased to bestow upon you; they entitle you to a better one, and I cherish the hope they give me, that the long wished for moment is not far distant, when we shall have only one temple and one altar, as we have only one sacrifice and one victim.

Be not afraid, Sir, I complain of your letter being too long; momentous as its subject is, I should not have found it so, though you had added your reflections and observations on the other points of our religion you likewise think to be superstitiously adulterated. No, Sir, I shall always be ready to give you on those points, as on the others, any explanation you may require of me, having nothing more at heart, than to convince you of the sincerity with which

I hold my opinions. I am, Sir, much obliged to you for your kind attention to M. J. B. B. and his publication.

LETTER

LETTER

FROM G. W. TO M. J. B. B.

June 13th, 1797.

Sir,

YOUR concessions are so little hurtful to the cause you defend, that you have almost made Roman Catholics of Mrs. E. and me. Depend upon this, Sir; it is by being willing to justify, at any rate, unjustifiable abuses, that the apologists of your religion do prejudice against, and keep people from it. Instead of ingenuously confessing there is no institution, however good, into which abuses do not creep in time, and the best and holiest are not free from them, they obstinately pretend to vindicate the most inexcusable, having always some plea or other, for maintaining and perpetuating their existence. One while, they will tell you, what you condemn, has for ages subsisted as it

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is, without considering that, what occasioned its introduction, possibly may no longer exist: at another time, that the Church has declared the practice you complain of, to be contrary neither to *faith* nor *morality*, not reflecting that, though not unlawful, it may not be always expedient: but if, what is become an abuse, happens to have been apologized for, by any of those men whose opinions are revered, attempts for its reformation, border upon profaneness.

This is not the only obstacle they raise against the end they seem to have in view; the sour and satiric zeal they are actuated by, in all their apologies, produces an effect equally contrary to their avowed purpose. They hardly write a page, a line, but they represent our reformers as objects of contempt and ridicule, lavishly bestowing upon them every vice and defect that can make a man truly odious.

edious. Were you to believe them, they were proud and ignorant hypocrites, who are perpetually contradicting themselves. It is by such a strain of reasoning, they expect to gain people to their party whom those pretended ignorant knew nevertheless how to draw from them: as if the means of bringing an adversary to one's sentiment, was to tell him he is a stupid, void of understanding, it being a truth not to be denied, that the reformed is attacked in the reformer, since if the one is without judgment, the other is not considerate who followed him. Those mighty reasoners must indeed know very little of the human heart, who fancy they may, by such springs and wiles, direct it to their mind.

Your manner, Sir, is totally the reverse, so much so, that one could wish to be of your opinion, even when there is reason to contradict it. Not to be behind you, in sincerity and can-
do

dour, I freely confess I am almost at a loss how to reply to your answers: they appear to me, in many respects, so satisfactory as to leave but little to wish for. Therefore not to abuse the complaisance you are still pleased to have, I shall here confine myself to a few words on the points which, not to lengthen my last too much, I omitted discussing.

I told you, Sir, I should return to the article of the Church, because I fear her voice is often mistaken, and, what are not so given for her decrees. That the Church, as you define her, is infallible, I readily grant; if she was not so, after the manner you say, it would be impossible to tell *when*, and *how* we could be convinced of her present infallibility; for as we could never know, to a certainty, where the infallibility, not yet in *being*, should begin, that is the precise number of voices which should constitute it; there

there would forever be irremoveable doubts. To say that the Church morally universal is possessed of *that infallibility*, is to say nothing more, to the purpose, since it will still be asked in what consists that *moral universality* of the Church, without which there would not be *infallibility*, and with which, there would be; for the *moral universality* of the Church met at Rimini, falling into error, is an undeniabie proof that *any such universality* of the Church, is not possessed of it. The only Church then, as described by you, is endowed with the *privilege of infallibility*, and can *infallibly* point out to us any revealed truth: against her only, the gates of Hell shall not prevail, or the word of God is an *inexplicable enigma*. No doubt but it was, because the universal Church was not duly represented at Rimini, or some of her representatives were there wanting, that, though the council fell into error, it is, by you maintained that the Church did not; but

but since the infallible Church is necessarily, as you describe her, why then, as soon as a question has been pronounced upon, by the Pope, speaking, as you say, *ex Cathedra*; or by a private council or meeting of bishops and divines his Holiness has approved, call you those heretics, who refuse adherence to any such decisions, as to a point of faith? Surely your conduct therein contradicts your doctrine, or I should be glad to know the contrary.

While speaking to you, Sir, about the adoration I thought the Roman Catholic paid, to statues and images, I should have added, to rotten bones and old rags, as the honour he bestows on them, appears to me equally idolatrous. In truth, when you see him prostrate before sad relics of a dead carcass returning to that nothing it came from, paying all boundless respect to senseless remains of a body

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worms have devoured; when you see the pearls and gold with which he enriches the shrines they are preserved in, and consider the long and perilous journeys he undertakes to visit them, you cannot but think he attributes thereto a supernatural virtue, and thus pays to what scarcely retains the name of a creature, an homage he owes only to the Creator.

I have been told that in your Church it was forbidden to read the holy scripture! Surely, Sir, this must be a calumny, it being not probable, not credible, that a child should be denied reading the last will of his Father; an heir the knowledge of the estate bequeathed unto him. I cannot imagine what may be the cause of this reproach, and would thank you for an information.

I do not deny, as before expressed, that in certain cases, traditions are to be held, agreeably to St. Paul's

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command; but I cannot think it true you prefer tradition before the scripture, which I am the more surprised to hear, as traditions may be false, like those the Pharisees were reproached with following, while scripture cannot; but undoubtedly I have been imposed upon, in this article, as I confess it has been the case in many others.

My objections against *indulgences* are not, I am sorry to tell it you, Sir, satisfactorily done away by your reply. I do not find it at all proved, from what you say, that Jesus Christ gave his Church a power of dispensing with punishments, the dispensation of which David's contrition, than which none has ever been greater, should, if any could, have deserved. But not to trespass on your time, I am willing to drop here that article, the more so, as I do not think it otherwise important.

What they say with respect to the authority

authority you ascribe to the Pope, that you substitute him for Christ, or at least, make him his equal, I thought always maliciously contrived and improbable: I could not be persuaded you believe he has the power of dispensing with the law of God, and receive what he is pleased to command you, with the same reverence and submission, as if Christ was speaking to you, through his mouth. Yet, as your Popes have assumed to themselves rights that might give credit to the assertion, as that of deposing Sovereigns, and absolving subjects from their allegiance, possibly enough the imputation is not wholly groundless, and I should be glad to know thereupon, your doctrine.

Without reflecting on mortification, we often see recommended in the scriptures, I must tell you, the Roman Catholic does, in an easy manner comply with the injunction, by observing

the fast his Church appoints. She forbids your eating flesh on certain days, but not feasting yourself, once in the day, upon a variety of the choicest fish that can be procured. The nicest dishes, provided there be no fat in them, are allowed, and compatible with your fasting, as well as the most exquisite wines. Fine mortification indeed! Do you think, Sir, this to have been the fast of St. Paul, when bringing, through it, his body unto subjection? For my part I really do not: my notions of fast are very different. *It is not what enters the body, that defiles the soul,* and the scruples of some brethren of yours, with whom I lately happened to dine on a fast day, who, for the world, would not have touched with their lips a mutton chop, though never so hard and dry, yet piously swallowed half a turbot, made me heartily laugh within myself, but were far, indeed very far from edifying me. I esteem such a fasting to be somewhat

somewhat like pharisaical virtues, with which God cannot be worshiped. It is on the quantity, much more than the quality fasting depends, and as it cannot be acceptable to God, but when it implies a true mortification, while I would intimate it, as an obligation incumbent upon every Christian, I should take care not to prescribe the mode of doing it, by laws so easily evaded, and which make the evader the more guilty, as, to lack of mortification, he unites the crime of hypocrisy. Besides, Sir, as already said, the law-makers in the Church have no right to add to the yoke of Christ: they are ordered *to teach to observe all things whatever he has commanded them*, Mat. xxviii, 20, not what they please; and this their law on fasting, that interdicts eating meat, under pain of damnation, a pain to be incurred only by the breaking of his commandments, is, forasmuch as it adds to it, an evident abuse of authority. They may,

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without doubt, recommend such a one; but to prescribe it under *pain of damnation*, is teaching, *for doctrines, the commandments of men*, in contempt of the divine law that forbids it. Mat. xv, 9.

Happening to peruse some tracts of yours on divinity, I very much wondered at finding there, in place of a plain and accurate exposition of your belief, and the authorities you ground it upon, little more than systems, objections and endless answers, fit rather to make proud sophists, than humble dispensers of the mysteries of Christ. Such inconsistency, I must confess, confirmed my prejudices against your religion. Do you really think, Sir, this, to be the way of teaching divinity? Surely you know better.

No more do I approve, as already observed, what you give in your Church for lives of Saints, which is mostly a long and insipid story of miracles

racles that had never a being, but in the over-heated brain of a confident writer. I cannot however say, I entertain the same opinion of all, there being some, which, though honoured and adorned by the penman, might excite the peruser to virtue, by example; but, as there are things true that are not always *like truth*, I would have them free from those unlikely wonders, and offer none to his perusal but such as are calculated to edify him.

I had almost omitted mentioning your *Holy water*. Seeing the eagerness and veneration with which it is received in your chapels, by your people who catch it with open arms and mouth, had you not told me you have only seven sacraments, I should have reckoned it to be one, from the efficacy apparently ascribed to it. Certain it is, it must have a peculiar property.

You have likewise in your Church
numberless

numberless vain ceremonies, on which it has been said (perhaps not without reason) that the performing of your religious service is not unlike a theatrical representation; and your worship of God, a mere shew. Much may be imputed to calumny ; yet that there is something true, is proved by the flocking of your brethren, where such are to be seen, while those of your chapels, where there is no such thing, are generally but little frequented.

Though particularly fond myself of music, I approve in a Church, neither your noisy thundering organs, nor your as noisy and bawling singers : both are equally troublesome to my soul which they should, and could, if better adapted to the purpose, sooth into devotion. I had rather be at a silent meeting of Quakers, where I might undisturbed think of, and converse with my Creator.

Whilst

Whilst Charity is the mark on which we are to be proved Christ's disciples, John xiii, 35, you are charged with damning, without mercy, any person who is not of your persuasion, so that, let a man be of a conduct, ever so irreproachable, he cannot be saved, if not in communion with you, and approving in all points what your Church approves. Any such disposition, that reminds me of the good Samaritan who practised charity, which the supposed orthodox Priest and Levite thought not fit to do, is undoubtedly the reverse of a Christian spirit.

Though I do not myself believe what several of our Protestant divines (whom in other respects I value for their abilities) have advanced and maintained, that the Pope is the Antichrist, spoken of, in the revelations of St. John, I should be glad to know how you refute this their assertion, the more so, as Mr. H—n you have perhaps heard, and

and I may happen to meet, is himself of that opinion he pretends to be demonstrated, to evidence. It would be not a little pleasure indeed, to shew him his mistake, and Mrs. E. in particular, would heartily thank you for the means of doing it; for she is so far become the advocate of your cause, that she wishes you to be always right, and would be sorry any objection could be made, you could not answer.

Not to omit any thing on a point I esteem to be of the utmost importance, that of the *infallibility* of the Church, I will impart to you a few more reflections upon it. I have already more than once expressed it, that I perfectly understand, on your exposition, how the Church is infallible; but I want clearly to know what you mean by *the Church*, having been told it was bishops *only*; our ideas could not agree, if these were yours. I will moreover enquire of you, how I am

I am to be certain I am not imposed upon, when told, the Church *not assembled*, or as you say, *dispersed*, has declared an article to be *point of faith*; for, to say that the Pope has put the question to her, (which, considering the difficulty of doing it, is besides hardly feasible) and it results, from the answers returned to him, that it is so, is by no means, an unquestionable proof of it, since it is not impossible, but the Pope might impose upon you, he being not excepted by the Royal Prophet, when he says, *all men are liars*.

There is an other thing I would still be offended at; this is, or at least, I hear it to be so, that you do not judge it necessary the bishops declare, on a question put to them, the belief of their respective Churches, and in such a case, *their silence is sufficient!* If it is necessary, in councils, the question be put to, and *positively answered* by every one of her representatives

sentatives, how does it happen that, with the same reasons for doing the same, it is otherwise done? Why should it not be put by the Pope, to every particular Church, and the answer *in writing*, made in the manner we see it practised in ancient councils, where we read for instance, *James, bishop of — interrogated has said: On this point, such is the faith of the Church I represent, so we believe and teach. Simon bishop of — interrogated has said, &c.* and so on. Certain it is, that unless you have sure and unquestionable means for informing me of a decision of the universal Church *dispersed*, there will always remain doubts incompatible with an article of faith, that admits of none.

Vainly you would say, that *the Church neither approves, nor is silent upon error*; for the doctrine of deposing powers and dispensing subjects from their allegiance to their Sovereign,
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in contradiction to the express commandment of God, an error taught and professed for ages in your Church, is an undeniable proof of the contrary.

Whenever human reason is to be captivated under the yoke of faith, it is an indispensable necessity to convince it, as much as it *can possibly be done*, of the existence of the law it must surrender to; otherwise it is, as often said, the yoke of Priests, not that of Christ, we are made to bear. I need not to express how much

I am, Sir, yours &c.

G. W.

L LETTER

L E T T E R

FROM M. J. B. B. TO G. W.

July 15, 1797.

Sir,

YOU cannot do me more pleasure than to speak as you do, of my answers to your objections and observations. The hope I conceive from it, makes the task I have still to go through, particularly engaging; and you may be sure I shall exert all my powers to do it, to your satisfaction.

You ask me, Sir, why, in our Church, they call one another Heretics, for not adhering as to a point of faith, to a decision of the Pope, speaking *ex Cathedra*, or that of a private council or meeting of bishops and divines, which his Holiness has approved.

It is, Sir, because men are not without passions, and not a few of them

them are by passions made unjust. Until a point be declared of faith, by the uncontroulable authority from which one cannot appeal, it is forbidden to call any man, Heretic, for not adhering to it, as such; for that, whatever is against a man's conscience, *though erroneous*, is according to the doctrine of St. Paul, *sinful in him*, Rom. xiv. 23; and let the authority or number of those who may condemn, as unlawful, that which he is *conscious* is not; as soon as that authority is not infallible, he cannot, when obliged to act, do it against his conscience. There is only one case wherein we ought to be determined by such an authority as is not infallible, and this is, when we are uncertain what to do, and there is *a present necessity* of acting. No doubt but, in such a case, we must side with the number, and for want of one infallible, be ruled by the weightiest authority.

This doctrine of St. Paul has been explained, by the notions our Church gives of Heresy, which she defines, as already said, *a voluntary and obſtinate error of the mind against the true faith*, and this cannot be viewed as ſuch, but when declared to be ſo, by infallible authority.

Agreeably to that undenial principle, though St. Cyprian contending, against the Pope St. Stephen; that those who had been baptized by Heretics, ſhould, when admitted into the Church, be baptized again, was condemned by the ſaid Pope and ſeveral particular Councils, St. Augustin does not hesitate to ſay, that, St. Cyprian was not a Heretic, *though in error*, because the Catholic Churc̄h had not decided the question.

It is to be observed that St. Paul who could ſpeak as follows; *If any one preach to you a gospel besides that which*
you

you have received, let him be anathema,' Gal. i. 9, says, on the present matter, 1 Cor. viii, even more than wanted, to establish the Catholic doctrine, inasmuch as he pronounces it to be *sinful in a man* to do what is there spoken of, against his conscience *vincibly erroneous*, while we suppose a case, when it is *invincibly* so; the reason, for St. Paul, to speak as he does, is that *meat* of which is there question, *commendeth us not to God*; for neither, says he, *if we eat, shall we abound, nor if we eat not, shall we want.* 1 Cor. viii, 8. Had the case been different, so would have been his speech.

The Roman Catholic believes it damnable to think there is any supernatural virtue in Relics of Saints: if he keeps with veneration, and carefully preserves them in shrines, it is because he looks upon them, as remains of bodies in which Jesus Christ has, in a special manner, been glorified, and

God himself has been pleased to honour the Relics of his favourite Servants, by making them instruments of many miracles he has visibly worked by them, as is manifest upon undeniable records; but there is nothing in the honour he pays to them, like that he pays to God; it is no more a divine honour than that shewed by the Jews to the ark, to the tables of the law, to Moses' rod; than the regard a well bred and thankful child has for any thing a dear father left him, as a memorial of his paternal fondness; a faithful husband for a ring worn by a beloved consort, whose remembrance he cherishes.

Were it true, (which we by no means deny,) that credulous simplicity had, without mistaking the cause, attributed to them fancied miracles, it does not hence follow, that God has not oftentimes made use of them, as instruments, to work real ones: Authentic

thentic and and evidenced facts proved beyond doubt the contrary, that the corruptible remains of his Friends may, when he pleases, as well declare in the new law, his power and glory, as in the old, Moses's rod, Elias's mantle and Eliseus's bones. 2 Kings xi, 14, again xiii, 21.

And why should we more doubt what stands proved to us, by unquestionable testimonies, if any were ever so, than the miraculous cures of diseases, wrought by the shadow of St. Peter, and by the napkins and handkerchiefs that had but touched the body of St. Paul; Acts v. 15: again xix 12.. Let us not inconsiderately believe; let us try the spirits, but at the same time, let us not think God's arm shortened, nor, weakly imagine he may be offended at the honour we pay to the instruments of his almighty power.

Our Church does not, as you have been

been erroneously told, forbid her children to read the scripture, not even in vulgar languages into which it has, to that very purpose, been, for ages, translated; but taught by St. Peter, *There are certain things in St. Paul's epistles, hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as also the rest of the scriptures, to their own perdition*; 2 Pet. iii, 16; and by St. Paul, that *great many adulterate the word of God*; 2 Cor. ii, 17, she has thought fit to take some precautions, which particular circumstances required, against rash interpretations, presumption and pride are too apt to make, declaring nobody should presume to interpret the scripture, to one's private judgment, as it belongs to her exclusively, to point out its true signification. Council of Trent, sess. 4.

The many fees daily brought forth in this country, by the unlimited liberty every one claims, of interpreting the scripture, to his private judgment, are

are a sensible proof of the necessity there is to put a restraint upon it.

As to what you have heard, that traditions were, for the Roman Catholic, rules of faith in preference to the scripture, you have not been rightly informed; the Roman Catholic owns the scripture, to be of the greatest authority upon earth; but as all things to be believed, are not written, 2 Thess. ii, 14, and those that are written, had, before they were so, been transmitted and delivered by tradition, (the only way of coming then to the knowledge of what was of faith, and what was not;) he receives and believes that which tradition shews him received and believed *in all ages, every where, and by all the Christian world, as the word of God,* with the same faith he receives and believes the scripture; therefore the Roman Catholic does not prefer any tradition to the scripture: no; but if any article given, as of faith, is not sufficiently

sufficiently explained in the scripture, he interrogates upon it, the same tradition that has authenticated the scripture, persuaded it can point out truth to him, as infallibly in one case, as in the other.

You have not been better informed, Sir, with respect to the authority the Roman Catholic ascribes to the Pope, whom he neither substitutes for, nor makes equal to Christ. It is true he reveres him as the head of the Church, which being a visible body must, under Christ, have a visible head; but whatever respect he pays to his person, he does not believe him infallible nor impeccable; neither does he believe he has authority to dispense with the law of God, or to absolve any one from the obligation of keeping the least of his commandments.

The power some Popes have aimed at, of deposing Sovereigns and dispensing

pensing subjects from their allegiance is by no means a sufficient proof that the Roman Catholic attributes to them the authority you are told he does. It is in the books expounding the articles of his faith, that his belief is to be sought for, and not in the deeds of the Popes he thinks himself only bound to vindicate, when agreeable to it.

I am glad of the opportunity you afford me of expounding at large the doctrine of the Roman Catholic on this subject, as it has been oftentimes misrepresented, and a farther elucidation will not be amiss.

The Roman Catholic is positive in denying to the Popes, or any other spiritual power upon earth, the authority of deposing Sovereigns, and dispensing subjects from their allegiance; that is a doctrine condemned by his Church, and which she never approved

approved. He that believes, *He that resisteth power*, (let it be what it will, Christian or heathen,) *resisteth the ordinance of God*, and they who resist, bring damnation to themselves.

But as such a declaration, plain as it is, might still appear to some people insufficient, I will here lay down how he understands the words of St. Paul; whom he takes to be the Sovereign he thinks himself, according to his doctrine, obliged to obey, under pain of disobeying God. I shall mean-while, explain the reasons his belief is grounded upon.

Upon St. Paul telling us, *every soul must be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God*, Rom. xiii, 1 &c. it may be asked whether an usurper should be considered as a power coming from God, and if the precept intimated to us by St. Paul's words, obliges us to obey such a power as a lawful one. In

In order clearly to anſwer this queſtion, it is to be diſtinguiſhed between *Sovereignty* and *Sovereign*. St. Paul does not ſay there is no *Sovereign* but from God; but, which is quite diſferent, there is no *ſovereignty or power* (not conſidering the perſon vested with it) but from God, it being his will that in this world there be *governors* and *governed*: hence we read, *Wifdom of Solomon vi, 3, Power is given you (Kings) of the Lord, and ſovereignty from the highest, who ſhall try your works and ſearch out your counſels.* This neceſſary diſtincſion once made, the *Sovereign* to be obeyed, can- not remain unknown.

But they ſay, a gang of conſpirators will dethrone my lawful *Sovereign*; and because I am not able to reſiſt them, I muſt obey him they ſet up in his ſtead, under pain of diſobeying God?

No doubt but you muſt: it is a natural
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consequence of the undeniable principle just laid down. The law imposing it upon you, is even notably impressed with divine wisdom, for that it dispenses with examining whether a sovereign is a lawful one, or not, which might oftentimes elude human enquiry.

But, they pursue, when must I obey the usurper? They yesterday dethroned my Sovereign: must I obey him to-day?

You must obey him from the very moment his law is promulgated, and *he can with the sword he bears, force obedience upon you.*

But his power is not yet confirmed? it is not yet acknowledged by any foreign authority?

Such a consideration is of no avail, when the commandment is urgent as in

in the text. He may *actu* force you to obey; *actu* you must obey. It is to no purpose to say that, because his power is not acknowledged by any foreign government, you are dispensed with obeying him, as it is no where written, that your obedience is made unlawful for want of such an acknowledgement, nor that it is necessary to render it indispensable.

They insist saying: my lawful Sovereign is still supported by a party: they still fight for his cause: determined, as I am, not to forsake him, am I not at liberty to quit every thing I possess, in expectation of being restored to it, and go and help him in the pursuit of his right, as far as it lies in my power?

No: because by so doing, you make void the precept of God, which admits of no alternative, as it is not said, *obey or go away.* Support him, as long as
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you

you may do it without incurring the loss of those rights, which CHARITY BEGINNING AT HOME orders you to preserve above all, such as your own substance, the bread of your wife and children ; so God himself will have you do ; but as soon as the forfeit of those rights, is to ensue from your perseverance in his party, the Same will have you obey the power that may decree it.

Such is, Sir, upon the submission due to higher powers, the doctrine of the Roman Catholic. If any one of his persuasion, has ever in his deeds deviated, or deviates from these principles, (and, we are sorry to say, this has but too often been the case with many of our deluded brethren*) it

* There have been Roman Catholics in England and Ireland, who entertained the groundless and criminal opinion, it was unlawful to take the oath of allegiance to the reigning family, as long as there should be any offspring of that of the Pretender, an error which, while

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ought to be imputed to the believer he disapproves and condemns, not to the belief, *which alone I have undertaken to expound, and vindicate.*

Ministers of the Gospel who are commanded to teach the people their duty, *that he who resisteth power, resisteth the ordinance of God;* and the Sovereign they are bound to obey, is *he whose inscription the tribute-money bears,* were you, unfaithful dispensers of the divine word, to countenance, any way, rebellion against him, how terrible the account to be required at your hands !

You do not disown mortification to be enjoined in the scripture; but you cannot, you say, approve of the manner the Roman Catholic practises it.

evidently reproved by holy writ, apologizes but too well for the restraint, from which they have, on that condition, been lately released.

No doubt but you will also allow meat to be more nourishing than fish, and of course more apt than fish, to raise and keep up our passions: wherefore if in order to subdue, and bring them down, the Roman Catholic, on certain days, out of mortification abstains from eating meat, allowing to himself, in place, some fish, it cannot be said he takes an unfit way of doing it. But, cry you, can there be any mortification in eating plentifully of nice fish, and drinking exquisite wine? Undoubtedly not: for which very reason the Roman Catholic is so far from thinking the precept duly complied with, by such a mortification, that he exactly views it as you yourself do, seeing therein nothing but a change, if not of luxury, at least, of entertainment; but from thence to infer that no good can arise from the fast his Church prescribes, is, suffer me to tell you, Sir, to draw, by no means a just consequence.

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We are taught by our Church, that the fast she wishes her children to observe, consists in a mortifying abstinence, and they would vainly, on fasting days, refrain from eating meat, unless any other things contrary to mortification, be at the same time scrupulously avoided: from whence it follows she condemns herself what you condemn, and sees nothing but the name of mortification, where you see nothing of it. She so far agrees with you, in the idea you entertain of fasting, which you will have to consist rather in the quantity of the things allowed, than in their quality, that she requires such a fast to be observed by those of her children who, on account of age, condition, or state of life, cannot entirely abstain from eating meat.

Besides, Sir, you seem to suppose, (which surely you do not expect to be granted,) that every Roman Catholic is enabled by his circumstances to supply

ply the want of meat with fish, even the nicest. I say, you seem so to suppose, because you cannot but know that such a supplement is in the power of very few Roman Catholics, who are only to be cited as examples of the prescribed mortification, when they abstain from availing themselves of it.

Certainly, Sir, when you quote these words of Jesus Christ, *What enters into the mouth, does not defile a man* Mat. xv, 11, you do not understand them, as I hear some people do, who would have them to be a condemnation of our abstinence from meat, on fasting days. It is not a little surprising to see these words so wrongly applied. In effect, on what occasion did Jesus Christ direct them to the Pharisees? They were reproaching his disciples *with eating bread without washing their hands*, on which Christ said: *what enters into the mouth, does not defile a man*: therefore, they say, it is against the doctrine of

of Jesus Christ to prescribe abstinence from meat. Fine conclusion indeed! Surely, in order thus to deceive one's self, one must be resolved to do it, at any rate.

No: *What enters into the mouth, does not defile a man* as being bad of itself: God has made nothing for men, they may not use with thanksgiving; but he who said, *what enters into the mouth, does not defile a man*, has also said by his Apostles, *mortify your body*; and to mortify one's body, is not to abstain only from what is bad and sinful, (which can never be permitted,) but at times, from what is good, in compliance with his will.

Granting that the Church has not the right to make disciplinary laws, importing an addition to the yoke of Christ; yet her pastors cannot be denied that, which you acknowledge, in your King, of prescribing fasts as he does; no

no more can they be denied that of making, for her government, under pain of ecclesiastical censure, such as they think fit for the better accomplishing of the precept, as it is a necessary conſequence of their being appointed her governors. Forgetful of the bounds set to their powers, were they to exceed them in points wherein they are not promised infallibility, ſuch as that concerning fast, which, as to the manner at leaſt, was never received in the Church as *a revealed one*, they ſhall, one day ac- count for it.

Your obſervation on the method of teaching divinity in our schools is but too juſt. I oftentimes thought myſelf that the ſtudy of it might be incomparably better directed. In fact, when we conſider of the end therein deſigned, which is a perfect knowledge of Christian *dogmas* and *morality*, it is obvious that the means adopted, do but

but inadequately anſwer the purpose.

Shall I tell you, Sir, the method I could wish, was followed: in the first place, I would have *dogmas* and *morality* clearly and concisely defined to students; and the former carefully distinguished from *discipline*, for want of which, one may be apt to confound them, as I myself saw it done by some people who looked upon any thing written, as a dogma. Dogmas should be briefly established on texts of the scripture precise and positive in the case; because to found them on texts that are not a direct proof of them, and may not improperly be otherwise interpreted, is, in my opinion, to make the truth one proposes to demonstrate, rather doubtful.

When, on undeniable authority I know, from conviction, what I am to believe and teach, of what importance or advantage may be to me endless discussions

tations upon points still undecided, wherein they attack, defend, object, answer, and deliver on obscure paſſages, obſcurer commentaries, ſo throwing away, without any improvement, a precious time never to be repaired? Of what avail can those tedious and too famous refutations of heresies be to me, when to know them to be proſcribed by an irrevocable judgment, is all I want to know? Instead of acquainting posterity with the offence they have given to the Church, we ſhould wish them buried, if poſſible, in an eternal oblivion, with the names of their proud and inconsiderate au- thors. Was an article attacked before me, the truth of which can be no longer questioned; my answer is ready: *God has ſpoken by his Church:* I cite the oracle, the dispute is at an end: Do they iñfift? St. Paul forbids me to reply, 1 Cor. xi, 16: I remain ſilent; and how eloquent is ſuch a ſilence! How many things it ſpeaks to

to the contradictor! No doubt but it much better avenges the denied truth; than those manifold reasons certain modern doctors, desirous of making shew of learning in abounding proofs, indiscreetly heap up, not seldom undoing by a weak one, what they were sure otherwise to establish.

The basis of my treatises upon *moral*ity (which would not be that delivered and taught by Jesus Christ, if not intelligible to the ignorant as well as to the learned, and which I would have freed from all insignificant and vain distinctions with which it is commonly disgraced) should be a thorough knowledge of the scriptures. No one incapable of accounting for, and expounding them satisfactorily, should be admitted into holy Orders; Reading and studying the scripture should be then the chief business I would have a student in divinity apply to. If, to a compleat knowledge of the scripture

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and of those of the civil laws which a teacher of morality ought not to be ignorant of, you add a solid and enlightened piety, believe me, you will have Priests according to God's own heart able dispensers of Christ's mysteries.

I do not know, Sir, whether you approve of this method of teaching and studying divinity, but such a one I would recommend, conscious it is beyond comparison, more conducive to the end intended, than that you have justly censured.

What is delivered in our Church, as lives of Saints, may, we do not deny it, be magnified by the writer and not always warrantable as truth, for which reason the Roman Catholic is not obliged to believe any one miracle besides what is in the scripture, and may, as to others, give them the credit he thinks in prudence they deserve, considering the honesty of the relater

relater, the authority of the witnesses, and such other circumstances that use, on like occasions, to gain his assent. The Church requires no more of him.

And now, Sir, if, upon the account of history, no one makes any doubt but there was such a man as Cæsar, or Alexander, or Arius, or Mahomet &c. and questions not many particulars of their lives and actions; why should they more doubt of the truth of miracles related, as done in their time, by credible men, such as St. Augustine, St. Jerom &c.? They have, at least, as much claim to our belief, as historical facts no better grounded, which are unquestioned.

But, they say, most of your miracles are so very ridiculous, that none but idiots can believe them. Though we do not pretend to make any comparison between one and the other case; it was not the whole doctrine of Jesus

Christ a scandal to the Jews, and to the Gentiles, a folly? And are there not miracles and facts in the old Testament one might as well think ridiculous? Take but faith away, what becomes, for instance, of Balaam spoken to, by his ass, of Sampson and his jaw-bones, Elias and his fiery chariot, Elisha's mantle, ax-head and dead bones, Gideon's pitchers, lamps and trumpets? Were not our unbelievers silenced by the authority, could not every one of these not doubted facts, be, with as much apparent reason turned into ridicule and buffoonery? No doubt but they could. Let us take care not to pronounce rashly on what is above the reach of our weak capacity. Let us remember these never to be forgotten words, *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, my ways, saith the Lord.* Isa. iv, 8. persuaded as we ought to be, that, if he is foolish, who inconsiderately believes every thing, he is not wise, who denies every thing he cannot comprehend. Whilst

Whilst I lay before you, Sir, the reasons which, with respect to things wherein God's finger is supposed to intervene, make it an obligation for us to mistrust our own judgment, I am far from disapproving the sentiment you deliver on this occasion. Convinc'd, on the contrary, of your observation being just, that there are things true, which wear not always the appearance of truth, I could wish, with you, removed from our lives of Saints, those wonderfully strange facts which afford amusement rather than edification; and the peruser was chiefly to find in them patterns of virtue, he could imitate.

The Roman Catholic does not attribute any sanctifying virtue to what is called *holy water*; nor does he expect from it, any good, any blessing or benefit, beyond its natural effects. He respects it, because, by the prayers of the minister of God, it is dedicated to a religious use, as is a church, a sa-

cerdotal habit, the plate of the altar which are otherwise looked on, than common houses, habits or plate: the sprinkling of it upon the faithful is, as it were, a speaking action, by which they are warned that, as bodies are cleansed from spots by water, so their souls must be purified by divine grace from the defilements of sin, to be fitted to appear in the sanctuary of God.

That many ignorant people are *scrupulously* and perhaps *superstitiously* attached to exterior practices, of no moment for salvation, and only meant to excite devotion they by no means supply, we freely confess and lament, for the sake of those, who, for want of being better informed, are offended at it; but you have agreed with me, Sir, not to confound the institution with the abuse, and, if I am not mistaken, I have sufficiently proved that of the *holy water* to be commendable, both in the motive it was inspired by, and the end aspired to. The

The rites and ceremonies the Roman Catholic Church thinks fit to prescribe in the performing of her divine mysteries, have furnished our adversaries with another charge. They would have it believed that the Roman Catholic makes his religion solely consist in gaudy representations, and show, and provided he may display in his temples sundry ornaments enriched with gold, silver and pearls, he fancies he has completely fulfilled his duties to God, and conveniently worshiped him; but is really this charge a merited one? I beg, Sir, you will yourself judge it.

The Roman Catholic is taught by his Church, that the first of commandments, that of adoring God, is not accomplished, but by those who adore him in *spirit* and *in truth*; that no sacrifice without that of the heart is acceptable to him, and he abominates those who worship him with their lips only. Can ever the Roman Catholic

tholic infer from such a doctrine, he has complied with the obligations here imposed upon him, by decking his altars, adorning his temples, and punctually observing mere ceremonials? Were I to suppose you could believe it, I should imagine, Sir, you might take it as an offence.

It is true that for several reasons not to be objected to, he thinks proper to celebrate divine mysteries with all the external majesty and pomp he possibly can.

FIRST. Because he is perswaded such ceremonies cannot be unacceptable to God which he himself minutely prescribed in the old Covenant..

SECONDLY. Because, if the greatness of an earthly Sovereign is never better displayed, than by the orderly magnificence he is surrounded with ; if nothing conciliates him more veneration and

and respect ; the greatness of the King of kings, of the Sovereign of sovereigns cannot be proclaimed with too much pomp and splendour.

IN FINE. Because such people as have, as it were, but bodily eyes, (the number of which is surely not small) learn still more from what they see, than from what they may be told, the profound and awful respect with which they are to approach their God, whose majesty is so magnificently declared.

Hence the famous Citizen of Geneva,* a man not to be accused of bigotry, did say with his usual independance, that gold and pearls vanity is arrayed with, should not be seen but in our temples, there to proclaim the grandeur of Him we meet to adore.

The Roman Catholic believes as you do, Sir, charity to be the mark, on which Jesus Christ will acknow-

*J. J. Rousseau. ledge

ledge us for his disciples, and is far from holding a different doctrine; therefore there cannot be any difference of opinion between us but about the nature of the charity that is to be so, the mark of the children of God; which it is incumbent to determine. Its characters are fully explained by St Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, &c. and that of them, upon which they ground the reproach here laid to the charge of the Roman Catholic, undoubtedly is, that *it does not think evil*; but, pray, Sir, does it from thence follow that one must, out of charity, see good, where good is not? Approve what God disapproves; and whilst he expressly tells us that there is only one way to Heaven, charitably grant that there is more than one? For my part I do not believe it; and yet this seems to be the consequence of the reproach laid at our door; for unless it is said, against St. Paul's doctrine 2 Cor. i. 18, that there is in God *yes* and *no*, and *faith*.

faith is not necessarily one, we cannot say, for example, that those two people have the same, one of which denies Jesus Christ to be God, which the other asserts.

Therefore the essential point here to be ascertained is, whether the Roman Catholic proves himself to be in that only way, out of which there is no salvation, and whether those who pretend to be in it, as well as he, are not excluded from it, by the doctrine they profess. I think I have shewed you to evidence, that the Roman Catholic is infallibly put in that way by the unerring guide he follows; hence the conclusion to be drawn with respect to those who do not walk in the same. The uncharitableness, if any, is to be imputed to the Legislator who made the law, not to him who is to be ruled by it. If the Roman Catholic is uncharitable for denying what Jesus Christ forbids him to grant, so is your Church when saying, Art. xviii. of your Religion:

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They are also to be accursed that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect he professes; so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of nature: so were St. Peter and St. John; so was St. Paul, when he said, that if any preach a gospel besides that which he has preached, let him be anathema, Gal. i, 9: again, when he reckons *sects* among those sins of which he pronounces, that they that do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God Gal. v, 20.

The very notion the Roman Catholic Church gives of heresy, is an undeniable proof of the groundlessness of the reproach laid to her charge, defining it, as repeatedly observed, to be *a voluntary and obstinate error of the mind against the true faith*, so that, with us, before a man may be accountable for the malice of that sin, he must voluntarily and obstinately reject a faith he knows to be true, and adopt another he knows not to be so. Now

Now, can it be said it follows from such principles (surely those of the Roman Catholic) he condemns, as you have been told, to eternal perdition, any body that does not profess himself a member of the Roman Catholic Church ? Undoubtedly not. He is taught by her to except all those who are out of his communion, owing to prejudices of birth or education, prejudices they would, if better informed, eagerly abjure : he is taught to except all those who are out of the pale of his Church, owing to their being deprived of the means of knowing that truth, they would gladly embrace, if they knew it ; and of these the number is certainly much greater than it is commonly imagined. It may be truly said of them, that they are but materially heretics, being really of the Church, in the desire and disposition of their hearts. I could never be persuaded, for example, that a lady good and upright, as is Mrs. E. a

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gentleman

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gentleman of a sound judgment and probity, as is her worthy friend, who call not themselves members of the Roman Catholic Church, are not really so, in their inclination, and that any worldly motive, prejudice or reason whatever might induce them to reject the true faith, if they were convinced as I am, that it is only taught and professed by the Roman Catholic Church.

No, Sir: these only are truly heretics who *voluntarily* and *obstinately* reject truth they know, to adhere to error, or who not being deprived of the means of knowing it, are unwilling to make use of them, owing to a carelessness, of which, was it question of the least of their earthly concerns, they are sure not to be found guilty; or in fine, who fearing more the censure of the world, than the wrath of God, dissemble it to their own mind as much as they can, by endeavouring to persuade themselves they are in a good faith

faith, as if they could hope to deceive God, as they may, to their perdition, in punishment of their wilful blindness, too well succeed in deceiving themselves.

To speak my own sentiment, Sir, as an individual, I do thoroughly believe that fewer souls perish for the sin of heresy, than for most other crimes and offences.

And now judge yourself from that open exposition of the Roman Catholic's tenets, whether the reproach he lies under, of being *uncharitable* is truly a deserved one. I dare presume you will do him more justice, and freely acknowledge that the charity they reproach him with wanting, would be a crime God will not suffer unpunished.

Is, or, is not the Pope, the Antichrist that is to come? This, Sir, is a question you put to me, and on which you ask my sentiment.

First of all, it must be observed that the name of Antichrist is not so much as once to be found in the Revelations of St. John, where the signs of his coming are by some people given as obvious; that the ancient fathers of the Church, such as St. Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Theodoret &c. never bring any passages out of the Revelations, when they speak of the Antichrist; and they all unanimously agree in saying: 1st: that the Antichrist foretold by the prophet Daniel, ch. vii, must be one single man: 2dly: that he shall not come till about the end of the world: 3dly: that he shall reign but a very short time.

This being premised, it may be argued, as follows

The Antichrist must be a single man; 200 men are not then the Antichrist, as they would have 200 Popes to be.

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The Antichrist shall not come till about the end of the world; he is not then come for above these 1260 years, as they pretend him to be.

The Antichrist shall reign but a short time; 200 men who reign one after the other for these 1260 years and more, are not then the Antichrist.

Supposing that the Popes from the epoch at which those gentlemen are pleased to transform them into Antichrists, have been such Antichrists as according to St. John, any one is who teaches false doctrines (which they should prove all these Popes have done) yet certain it is they could not be said to be the true Antichrist who according to the same, i Epist. ii, 18, is to come, which they should shew for the consistency of their system.

We read also in the scripture that the Antichrist will make himself adored;

O₂ pretending

pretending to be Christ; and does any body dare say that there was ever a Pope who did such things? What is called kissing the slipper of the Pope, which some people would perhaps have looked upon, as an act of adoration, is in reality but what elsewhere goes by the name of *etiquette de cour*, a mere ceremonial, which is no more an adoration in Rome, than the kissing of the hand, in St. James's palace.

I am not ignorant of the contrivance they recur to, to extricate themselves from these difficulties they cannot avoid seeing: they tell us, that *a time and times, and the dividing of a time*, spoken of by Daniel, ch. vii, v. 25, or 42 months as related in the Revelations, ch. xiii, v. 5, are 1260 days, which in a prophetic style, make as many years; and that just so long the Polish Antichrist must reign.

It is true we have two instances in
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the scripture, and only two, in which days are put for years, namely, Numb. xiv, 34, and Ezek. iv, 5; and in both places we are informed that days *unusually* stand for years; but there is not one, for ought I know, where years, or months are to be resolved into days, and these days into years; and unless we had particular proofs of such a conversion, and were admonished of it, as in the above two places, days, even in the writings of the prophets, are to be taken for days, months for months, years for years.

But, though that gratuitous and wholly groundless assertion, was to them granted, yet would they not be the better for it, as it will be still incumbent upon them, for the accomplishment of the prophecy, to appoint a certain epoch, at which their Popes Antichrists began, wherein they have until now miscarried. One of them having made his computation from the year

year 410, the antichristian reign of the Popes should have come to a period in 1670; or therabouts; every body knows whether any like thing then took place! Another who had computed from the year 455 or 56, waited, to no purpose, for it, in 1715 or 16. A third who made his first Pope Antichrist in 475, has likewise been disappointed in his expectation in the year 1735. Shall the modern interpreters, such as Mr. H—n, be more fortunate? Time must tell: O Lord, what is man, delivered to the vanity of his own thoughts !!

While we granted the above ground-lefs, not to say absurd assertion, it is well understood that it would still remain to prove how a *single man* may be 200 men, or 200 men *a single man*. Until the abettors of such a strange and ridiculous opinion, on which you desired to know my sentiment, are able to reconcile the many contradictions. they

they fall into, to make it plausible ; I flatter myself you will be satisfied with this already too long confutation.

As to what is to be understood by the *scarlet whore*, the fall of which is foretold by St. John, none, to my knowledge, but those gentlemen could till now positively tell us. The fathers of the Church who were not favoured with the same gifts, have generally understood by the *scarlet whore*, the heathen Rome, and its heathen Emperors, with their dress of purple and scarlet. Such is also the sentiment of several learned Protestant divines, of Dr. Hammond in particular, who, in his first note on the Revelations, ch. xvii, gives their interpretation in these words. “ What is said of the “ fall of Babylon, cannot belong to “ *christian Rome* ”.... again in his paraphrase, pag. 927, “ I will shew thee “ the vengeance that is ready to befal “ the imperial dignity of Rome, fitly
“ stilyed

" styled *the great whore* for their
" worship of many heathen Gods. I
" saw a woman, that great whore, *the*
" *imperial power of heathen Rome*, seated
" *on an Emperor in a scarlet robe*, a great
" blasphemer against God &c. "

You have been misinformed, Sir, when told that by *the Church*, the Roman Catholic understands, *only* her bishops. The Church, as understood by him, is the whole of the faithful under the direction of their lawful pastors, which definition implies both; with this difference that, according to the order established by Jesus Christ, the former are to be taught by the latter.

Now, if you ask which are these lawful pastors, if bishops *only*; I will answer you, that the elders you style *Vicars* and we call *Curés*, who by their calling and mission, have a flock to feed, to whom it has been said in the
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persons of the seventy-two disciples they represent, - *He who hears you, hears me &c.* Luke x, 16, and together with the bishops : - *Look well to yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has placed you overseers, to govern the Church of God,* Acts xx, 28, are lawful pastors, as well as bishops, whose, denomination they formerly partook, (though of an inferiour rank in the ecclesiastic hierarchy;) and of course witnesses with them of the faith delivered to those they succeed; which is instanced in what we see observed at the Council of Jerusalem, Acts xv, where the *apostles* and *seniors* met together to consider of the matter referred to both.

As to the other question you put to me, how one may know, with certainty, that the universal Church *dispersed* has spoken on a contradicted point, adding that; to say the Pope has interrogated her (which you think
hardly

hardly feasible) and he has declared that the answers returned to him prove it to be so, is not a proof to be necessarily relied on, for that the Pope is not excepted by the Royal prophet, when he says, *all men are liars*; this should be a satisfactory answer, that *the decision of the Pope on a point he declares he has duly submitted to the Church, becomes, when not contradicted, her decision; and is to be received as such, by her children*; but the way of interrogating her, you yourself hint at, might, (while it shews that to be far from difficult which you think *hardly feasible*,) easily be made to answer the purpose, in such a manner as to prevent any imposition you may fear, and entirely do away your subsequent observation on the principle generally admitted, which you maintain, from example, to be exceptionable.

The Catholic Church being divided into metropolitanships, metropolitanships into suffragan bishoprics, let the Pope

Pope, in order to interrogate her, send the question to each metropolitan, who will send it to each of his suffragan bishops: the question having been put to, and answered by the *vicars*, or *cureès* in their respective dioceses, each suffragan bishop shall send the faith of his particular Church, to the metropolitan, who, with that of his metropolis, will send it to the Pope: the Pope after receiving the same from all the particular Churches, compounding the universal Church, sees the result, and sends it printed, with the declaration of each particular Church, to each metropolitan, who gets it likewise printed in as many copies as wanted, and sends it to each suffragan bishop who does the same, and sends it, each in their respective dioceses to the *vicars* or *cureès*, the question has been put to, in order for them to acquaint their particular flock with what Christ has been pleased to reveal to his Church.

As every particular church could thus see her particular declaration on the question put to her, and the result of all brought together, proved to be the oracle of the Holy Ghost, the imposition you apprehend, would be impossible, while you are certain, beyond all doubt, the universal Church has spoken.

Surely, there is nothing so practicable and easy as this way of interrogating the Church; and seeing that, in matters of *faith*, the organs of her belief and doctrine have, according to your just observation, nothing more to do on a proposed point than to declare what they *believe* and *teach*, without commentaries or discussion; it would be to be wished that, when the Church is to be interrogated, it was done rather in this manner, than to recur to a general Council; which it is not always possible to convene, and which is always liable to numberless difficulties.

I shall

I shall be short, with respect to your last enquiry. The silence of a bishop on a question put to him by the head, and in the name of the Church, about the belief and doctrine of those he represents, concerning a controverted article of faith, can only be reckoned *sufficient*, when it leaves not any room to doubt; and for the weighty reasons you produce, one could wish that, on points so highly important, an express answer was always required.

Persuaded your objections and observations stand so far satisfactorily answered, I shall wait for a new opportunity of convincing you that

I am, with sincere respect, Sir,

M. J. B. B.

LETTER

FROM G. W. TO M. J. B. B.

July 19th, 1797.

Sir,

YOUR last increases not a little my obligations to you, and *entre nous*, I begin seriously to fear you will make a convert of me. I shall say nothing of Mrs. E. who instead of corroborating my objections, sticks not to call into doubt, the solidity of any one I make, since she hears and fees your answers. I had at first, but one antagonist, now I have two, and should willingly look upon the last, as the most formidable. Yet, Sir, unless you are plagued with my objections, I have still something to say; neither am I totally at an end of my observations, your letter affording matter for one, with which I shall begin.

The Roman Catholic, you say, is not obliged to believe any one miracle besides

besides what is in the scripture ; neither is he then obliged to believe Saints, those declared to be so, on such miracles as recorded in your legends, the only criterion however of your Saints, without which, I am told, they could not get admittance into your calender. But, if he is not obliged to believe them Saints, why then does your Church set up festivals to them, you oblige him to keep holy and observe, under pain of deadly sin ? Why does she anathematize whoever rejects their invocations ? It seems to me very strange indeed, I should be obliged to invoke as a Saint, a being possibly in Hell.

Had you not undeceived me, such a contradiction, when you make in fact *necessary*, what you say to be only *good* and *profitable*, would have been a powerful reason with me, to believe as true, the scornful saying, I was nursed with ; *he is ignorant as a Papist,*

the consequence here is so obviously striking. I hope you will not be offended at it, Sir; but this was (upon what ground I know not) the opinion then, if not now, generally entertained of those of your persuasion.

Upon my meeting, two days ago, one of your gentlemen with whom I happened to speak, among other things, of certain prescriptions of your Church, I do not approve; could you have imagined the invincible argument (in his opinion) with which he thought to silence me? Sir, said he, *let him who will not hear the Church, be to thee as a heathen and a publican.* As I did not think proper to enter with him, into any discussion, (though I could not but stare at his well chosen quotation) I dropped the subject, satisfied with telling him, that the scripture was so full of charity, one could abuse it, unpunished.

Surely, Sir, you will confess it: this was a gross misapplication of scripture

ture, (and I fear it to be often the case with many of your apologists, when they quote it.) In effect, what is the import of these words in the text? There is question of a sin a man might be guilty of, against another, which supposes the violation of a divine precept; Jesus Christ, to shew the order of a fraternal correction, says to the offended; *Go and tell him* (the offender) *his fault betwixt thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established; but if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church,* that is, to the overseers who are placed over thee and him, to enforce the keeping of the commandments of God, in the particular church, or congregation you both belong to; - (for, to be sure, one would not have him go and tell it to the universal Church) *and if he shall neglect*

neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican; and so ought to be all scandalous and incorrigible sinners, which the Church, after St. Paul's example, 1 Cor. v, should charitably take away, from among the flock, by ecclesiastical censure.

Such, methinks, Sir, is the sense of the text in St. Mat. xviii, 15, and not at all that the ecclesiastic legislators must be obeyed, in all and every thing, they are pleased to prescribe.

There is a reproach, the Roman Catholics lie under, I could wish unmerited: they are accused of being cruel, in conformity to, and compliance with the doctrine of their Church. However, I cannot say it to be a consequence of the principles you have so far explained; but we have recorded in our history of England, so many instances of their cruelty, that the imputation cannot be wholly groundless.

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This is another consideration that prejudiced me very much against your religion, it being impossible for me to believe, that a religion which can justify such excesses as the Roman Catholics have been guilty of, in persecuting the Protestants, they made martyrs by hundreds, could be that of a God-man, who died for his enemies.

There is no occasion for observing, that I unfold my heart to you on every point: I was always the more offended at this one, as I judge *intoleration* to be diametrically opposite to the spirit of our amiable Master, whom we see so severely rebuke his disciples, because of the desire they expressed, of calling for fire to come from Heaven, upon a city that had refused them admittance. Luke ix, 54.

Any other objections or observations I could add, being sufficiently answered by your preceding explanations; I think

think these will be the last I shall trouble you with; and persuaded your answers to them, will afresh entitle you to my gratitude, I here anticipate expressing it, by assuring you beforehand, that it is equal to the esteem with which

I am, Sir,

G. W.

L E T T E R

FROM M. J. B. B. TO G. W.

July 15, 1797.

Sir,

IF my answers to your objections, increases, as you are pleased to say, your obligations to me, your kind and flattering reflections, add not a little, to the many reasons I have, to hope you shall not have known truth in vain. Fear not, Sir, I repeat it to you

you, to tire me with your objections ; were you, on this consideration, to omit a single one, you might otherwise think fit to make, I should certainly complain of it.

Your conclusion, that from the Roman Catholic not being obliged to believe any miracles contained in our legends, it follows, he is not obliged to believe saints, those declared to be so, upon such miracles, is certainly right : no, Sir, he is not obliged to believe them saints, under pain of damnation ; nor has his Church *decreed* it to be an obligation, for her children, to keep festivals set up to any saint, under such pain. Regulations on this subject, are mostly, in each particular church, of the making of her particular governors, who are not infallible ; neither, as before said, is so the Church herself, *on points not revealed*. That those regulations be not always free from abuse, we are ready to grant, without any prejudice to our faith. You

You do not know, Sir, as you say, what can be the reason of the saying, with which you have been nursed: *he is ignorant as a Papist*: adding, that it was the opinion generally entertained then, if not now, of those of our persuasion; and you never knew the ground it was founded upon.

I may perhaps, Sir, tell it you: the first reason for it, which occurs to me is, that it was a proper way of bringing contempt upon those, they through derision called *Papists*; and of giving to understand, that reading the Bible, (which they pretended the Papists were forbidden to do,) had revealed to its new perusers, truths, until now hidden from them, and without which, one cannot but be *ignorant*.

Another reason of the saying is that in reality, the Roman Catholics, or at least, most of them, were not perhaps at that time, very learned, which

which you will not find very surprising, when you are informed how they were then instructed.

The following are some of the laws that cast a light upon the matter.

29 Eliz. ch. vi. All teachers, or keepers of private schools, being Papists recusants, incurred the forfeiture of 40s. per *diem*, for the offence, as did also the maintainers, or retainers of persons of this description.

Again. Every person of whatsoever age or sex, going abroad to receive a foreign education forfeited his, or her life estate, both real and personal.

8 Jam. I. ch. iv. All recusant convicts were disabled to be executors, administrators or guardians, not only to strangers, but even *to their own children.*

Again. The bringer from beyond

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sea, printer, seller or buyer of any popish books, incurred the forfeiture of 40*s.* for every such book.

3 Charl. I. ch. iii. All persons convicted of giving or receiving a popish education abroad, or of sending money for that purpose beyond sea, were made, not only to forfeit their life estates, both real and personal, but were, moreover, disabled to bring any action at law, or to present any suit in equity; and among many other disabilities, they were rendered absolutely incapable of any legacies, or dead gifts.

11 and 12 W.M. III. Every schoolmaster of the Romish persuasion was adjudged to perpetual imprisonment.

Again. All persons educated in the Popish religion, not having taken the oath of supremacy and allegiance, within six months after their attaining the age of 16 years, were made incapable

pable to take, either by descent or purchase, any lands, or profits out of lands; and the next Protestant of kin, was entitled to receive the rent and profit of them, during the life of the recusant, without being accountable to any person whatever, for the same; and an additional forfeiture of £.100 was imposed upon all persons giving their children a Popish education, &c.

And now, Sir, had the Roman Catholics been, at that time, really ignorant, should you, in earnest, be surprised at it? For my part, if I am surprised at any thing, it is not, that they were ignorant, but that they have not all, even to one, renounced a religion that brought upon them such restraint and persecutions.

I cannot forbear, on this occasion, from imparting to you an idea that presents itself to my mind. I imagine a man without prejudice either for, or

against Christ's religion: I will suppose him, on account of what he witnesses, desirous of knowing a religion, by which both persecutors and persecuted pretend to be ruled, and he opens to this effect, the book said to contain its doctrine: which, pray, after reading in it; *The world shall hate and persecute you: you shall be odious to all, for my name: they shall put you to death:* which I say, do you think he will take for the true observer of its maxims? Will it be, in your opinion, those who wantonly strip the others of every thing dear to them, or those who patiently suffer it? Will it be those who are willing to lose even their own souls, rather than to forsake their religion, or those who drag them into prison; and rather than to suffer any loss, are always ready to change or modify theirs, to the will and caprice of their overbearing Masters? I presume your answer, Sir, it cannot be doubtful. As for me, I am so much struck with this

this conſideration, that, had I been in his place, I could not but have ſaid: if those are the true diſciples, who ſhall be treated like their Maſter, there cannot be any fear of a miſtake; they are pointed out, by what they undergo.

Your quoter of the ſcripture, whom you call one of our gentlemen, (which I cannot ſay I am very proud of) deſerved your reply. The interpretation you give of the text in St. Matthew, ſeems to me perfectly right.

That the Roman Catholicks, un-mindful of the ſpirit of the religion they profess, have exercized many cruelties againſt the Protestants, is by no means to be denied; but that which you will also acknowledge is, the Protestants have been guilty towards them, of, at leaſt, the ſame barbarities. Bear with me only a moment Sir, and I will here lay before you, a ſhortened relation of the chief tranſactions that

then took place, which, I am certain, will put it to you beyond all doubt.

At a time when all England was Roman Catholic, Henry the eighth requested of the head of the Church, a dispensation not to be granted. It was therefore refused. You know, full as well as I do, what ensued, a schism not to be excused by the *inexcusable abuses* then justly complained of, since they could be renounced, without renouncing the faith, with which they are not to be confounded. However it be ; actuated by motives one cannot say inspired from above, Henry VIII. abjures this faith, which was that of his Ancestors, and had, for ages, made England a seminary of Saints. He gets himself declared Supreme Head of the Church, he is about to establish ; and to deny this new title of his, will soon be made high treason.

spiritual supremacy is acknowledged and confirmed, and all spiritual subordination to the See of Rome is forever abolished ; and every degree of ecclesiastical or spiritual submission to the Pope, is made punishable, under the penalties of premunire.

28 Henry VIII. ch. x. It is made high treason to refuse the oath of supremacy, when tendered.

1 Edw. VI. ch. xii. The denial of the spiritual supremacy of the infant King, is made a crime of high treason, punishable with death.

2 and 3 Edw. VI. ch. i. An act is passed for a general change and uniformity of divine service and the administration of the sacraments throughout the realm ; and the non-conformity thereto, is made punishable with perpetual imprisonment.

1 Eliz.

1 Eliz. ch. iv. Every person neglecting to frequent the Church, upon a holy-day, is amerced in 12*d.* for every such offence, and made liable to all the rigour of ecclesiastical censure.

13 Eliz. ch. ii. All persons giving, or receiving absolution, according to the rites of the Church of Rome..... and all justices of the peace not disclosing an offence of this kind, to them declared, are subject to the penalties and forfeitures of premunire.

23 Eliz. ch. i. All persons withdrawing others, or withdrawn themselves to the Romish religion, with the aiders, maintainers, or concealers of any such persons, are made guilty of high treason.

25 Eliz., ch. ii. The forfeiture of 200 marks, and one year's imprisonment, are made the penalty of saying mass, and the like term of imprison-

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ment, with the forfeiture of 100 marks, is made the penalty for hearing it; and the neglect of attending divine service, according to the established form of worship, is punishable with the forfeiture of £20 every month, and of £200 every year.

Again. All Priests are ordered to depart out of the realm, and prohibited to come, or return to it, under the penalty of high treason; and it is made felony to receive or relieve a person of that description; every person contributing towards the support or maintenance of any such persons beyond seas, incurred the danger and penalties of *premunire*.

Again. It is enacted, that every person not discovering a Priest to a Justice of the peace, shall be arbitrarily fined and imprisoned, at the Queen's pleasure.

29 Eliz. ch. vi. Every feoffment, gift, grant, conveyance, alienation, estate, lease, incumbrance and limitation of use of, or out of lands, tenements or hereditaments, made since the beginning of the Queen's reign, or thereafter to be made by *any recusant*, is declared void, as against the Queen's Majesty, for, or concerning the levying of pecuniary mulcts and forfeitures of such recusants; and the option is also submitted to her Majesty, of seizing two thirds of such a recusant's lands, in lieu of the monthly forfeiture of £20, for not frequenting the Church.

3 Jam. I. ch. ii. and iv. A proclamation is framed against persons not frequenting the Church; and if any person, against whom such proclamation is made, do not make their appearance of record, at the next assizes or sessions, such persons are from henceforth convicted in law, of the crime of which they are so indicted,
and

and become liable to the forfeiture of £20 by the month, or of two thirds of their lands, without any farther conviction.

Again. Every subject, either within or without this realm, reconciling another, or being reconciled himself to the Church of Rome, is declared guilty of high treason; and all persons having in their houses, service or pay, any recusants, are made to pay £10 every month, for which they should so retain and maintain them.

3 Jam. I. ch. iv. Every informer of a mass said at any particular house, or elsewhere, is entitled to one third of the forfeiture of the person so saying, or assisting at it.

Again. Every married woman convicted of Popish recusancy, or not conforming within the first 12 months of her marriage, forfeits two thirds of her

her jointure and dower, and is moreover disabled to be executrix or administratrix of her husband.

Again. Every Popish recusant convict is declared to be excommunicated, and ordered to be treated as such. All Popish marriages and baptisms are prohibited under the penalty of £100, and burials, of £20, for each offence. The life-estates of persons forfeiting the same, for going beyond the seas, are to be enjoyed by the next kin, who is no recusant, until such forfeiting person shall conform to the established religion.

7 Jam. I. ch. vi. Every married woman convicted of recusancy, for not frequenting the Church, is condemned to imprisonment till she conform, or until her husband choose to keep her at liberty, by paying £10 every month, to the crown, or by forfeiting two thirds of his lands.

30 Charl. II.

30 Charl. 2. stat. ii. A new test is framed and required of every person, against *transubſtantiation*, the *invocation of Saints* and the *mass*, in order to exclude all Popish members from both houses of Parliament.

11 and 12 Wm. III. ch. vi. The reward of £100 is given to every discoverer of a Romish Bishop and Priest; and every Bishop, Priest or Schoolmaster of the Romish persuasion, exercising their respective functions within this realm, are adjudged to perpetual imprisonment.

9 Geo. I. ch. xviii. The lands of Papists are, in 1728, charged with the sum of £100000, over and above the double land-tax, which they had long paid..

Such is, Sir, in a very abbreviate manner the extreme rigour with which the legislature of this country has,
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through a long series of years, punished the crime of Popery. Was it, or was it not deserved? The repeal of most of those severe laws, which your justly beloved King, and unprejudiced Parliament cancel one after the other, answer sufficiently the question.

But, without otherwise reflecting upon cruelties we both equally condemn and abhor, nor examining if the Protestants were guilty of the greatest, or if it was the Roman Catholics, it may (were the case to admit of any apology) be allowed to ask, which of them might have been more excusable, whether the Roman Catholic who, rather than to adhere to innovations subversive of his faith, repelled through violence, the violence offered, to force them upon him, was more so, than the Protestant who offered it. For my part, Sir, I should think, that, If I am not to give up, undefended, my estate to an usurper, I might perhaps be somewhat

somewhat excusable for defending my faith, the treasure I inherited from my Ancestors, against an invader who would *violently* take it from me.

But, Sir, let the apology that one could make in favour of the Roman Catholic, be what it may, I am far from exculpating him. The Protestant was wrong, in the violence he offered to the Roman Catholic, to oblige him to renounce his faith; and the Roman Catholic was not right, when having it in his power, he forced the Protestant to retain a faith he was willing to renounce. The example of our divine Master, who left even his Apostles to their own choice, when he said to them, *will ye also go away?* John vi, 18, taught them to behave in a different manner. When will men be made sensible, that the only way of bringing disciples to Jesus Christ, is closely to follow his example, *to begin to do*, that is, to practise all virtues, and then *to teach?* Acts i, 1. R2 I am

I am myself, Sir, so much of your sentiment upon toleration, that the contrary has my hearty abhorrence. Were I a legislator, I would have no body troubled for his religion. I take it to be the greatest injustice, to punish a man for not thinking as another man does ; as if it was in our power to model our consciences as we please, and to change them as one does his cloaths. A man cannot be accountable to another man, but for the engagements he can contract with him; he cannot oblige himself to have the same thoughts with another; therefore it is a most cruel tyranny, to punish him for not having them, to rob him of his social privileges, because his thoughts are not your thoughts, and he addresses his Creator in a way different from yours. When properly qualified to serve our fellow-citizens, what more do they want from us, but integrity? I was always offended at the manner
the Protestants

Protestants were used in France, and some other countries: that people, honest in their dealings, charitable to the poor, and submissive to the laws, had been kept in a sort of civil degradation on no other account than that of their religious tenets, was, in my eyes, an injustice that admits of no justification, and I could never approve.

Sovereigns, strike with the sword of the law whoever transgresses it, it is your right and duty; but take care not to make our religious opinions a government affair: we are to account for them, to none but God. It is because Sovereigns said to men, *on this, and no other altar, you shall offer up your sacrifices,* that the earth has so many times been stained with the blood of its blinded inhabitants. Leave every one of your subjects to worship the supreme Being, after his own manner, satisfied with offering to their imitation, patterns of all the virtues religion prescribes

prescribes, and soon you will see dying away, that jealous, restless spirit of *proselytism*, which makes one part of mankind persecute the other in the name of God, and changes brethren, who, acting after his example, should give their life for one another, into irreconcileable enemies that reckon for a merit, the implacable hatred they mutually entertain.

Now, Sir, I should imagine I have gone, to your satisfaction, through the task I was to execute; and unless on a further consideration, any new objection occurs to you, nothing, that I know, is at present incumbent upon me, but to pray to Heaven for the finishing of the work I flatter myself, is now begun. Were I to hear in my own country, which I have the chearing hope of being soon restored to,*

* The decree of deportation made against M. J. B. B. and his fellow sufferers, was then repealed.

that

that my feeble endeavours had, through divine efficacy, been able to remove the unjust prejudices you so far harboured against our holy religion, I should forever doubly bless his goodness, for having, while he thought me worthy to suffer for his sake, made my exile a fit occasion of procuring his glory.

I am, and shall always be, with
sincere respect, Sir,

M. J. B. B.

LETTER

FROM G. W. TO M. J. B. B.

27th, August 1797.

Sir,

I do not see, even upon a mature consideration, any new objection I could make. I frankly confess your answers

aafwers have generally exceeded my expectations. I did not indeed think your religion could be so well vindicated; and, to use Agrippa's words; *almost you persuade me to be a Roman Catholic.* I wish, sincerely wish any person prejudiced against your religion as I was, and many are, might also be undeceived as I am. Would to God that your Church, sensible of the urgency of doing it, may, by an entire reformation of the abuses I have noted, pave the way to a reconciliation, never so possible! Dear Sir, had not these abuses existed, or their reformation earnestly been desired and undertaken, what evil would have been prevented! It is the fault, solely the fault of the heads of your Church, if adoring the same God, being disciples of the same Master, and confessing the same Redeemer, we do not adore him in the same temple, and present our offerings at the same altar; but so long as, instead of imitating St. Paul, who circumcised

cumcised his disciple, notwithstanding the decision of the meeting of Jerusalem, and was every where making himself all to all, to gain all to Christ, they will, as much as possible, through a ridiculous attachment to *doctrines and precepts of men*, destroy, in place of edifying, create divisions and devote to perdition, souls he has redeemed by the shedding of his divine blood, the wall of partition will, I fear, stand; and their pretended zeal that causes them to cross seas to get disciples, shall not have any other reward but that the Gospel tells, is reserved to those they too well imitate. I speak it with confidence, Sir, being internally convinced of what I say: The reformation of the abuses I have taken notice of, would undoubtedly reconcile to your Church, thousands of Protestants. The new sects daily springing among us, out of each other, announce the want we are in, of being fixed, and never, perhaps, was a more auspicious

auspicious moment to bring about a reconciliation.

I am commissioned by Mrs. E. to tell you, that as soon as we have done with our discussion, she has one herself to enter upon, with you, and she would take it kind from you, to call on her, on Thursday morning, between the hours of 10 and 12, if possible.

I am very sorry I was not at home on Monday evening, when you called; it had been so exceeding hot, all that day, that I was just gone out. I went for a walk to Kensington-gardens, with the gentleman in black you have seen at Mrs. E's. I flatter myself I shall lose nothing by it, and you will often give me the opportunity of repeating by word of mouth, the assurance of the sincere gratitude, esteem and respect with which I am, Sir,

G. W.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 37 line 1, *bim*, read, *the penitent*
P. 120, line 1, *be that believes*, read, *he believes that*

☞ Though, considering the circumstances wherein it is spoken, the meaning of the word *soul*, p. 172 l. 14, is obvious, yet, lest it should happen to be misunderstood, the Editor thinks proper to observe, that it is used here, for *life*.

